

July 2021

Flatiron District Public Life Study Findings

Gehl

The Flatiron Partnership Is Expanding

The BID area is expanding into new territory. Our goal is to understand how the expansion area is operating today to in turn set benchmarks and define success criteria for how the BID might operate tomorrow.

The expansion presents an opportunity to think big, to redefine a BID's role, to do things differently than what's been done for the past 15 years.



Research Questions

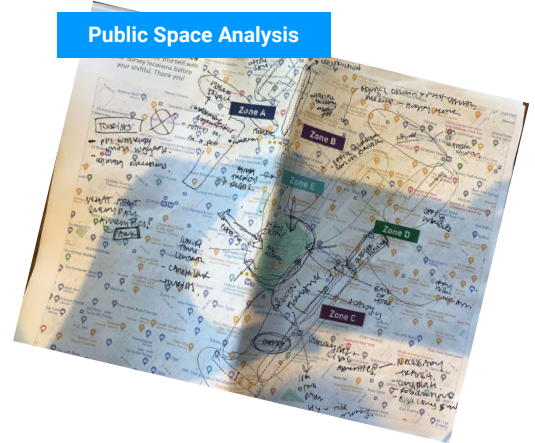
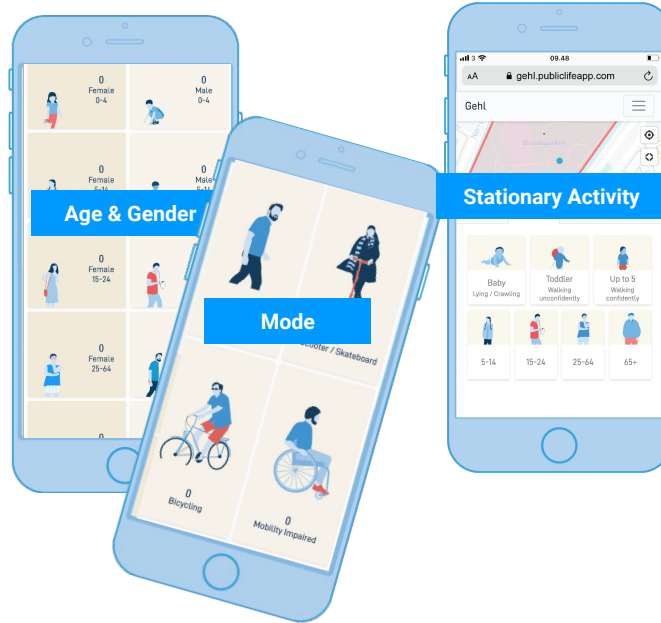
- How are the expansion areas operating today?
- What should be celebrated?
- How might we celebrate the old and the small in partnership with the new and the large-scale?
- How might the District be at the cutting edge of changes to our streets, deliveries, retail, and office space?

What we observed

Public Space, Public Life (PSPL) Survey Methods

Over two days (June 10 & June 12) of observational surveys, we collected data on how people move through and spend time in the expansion area. We also mapped and observed the public space quality of the expansion area.

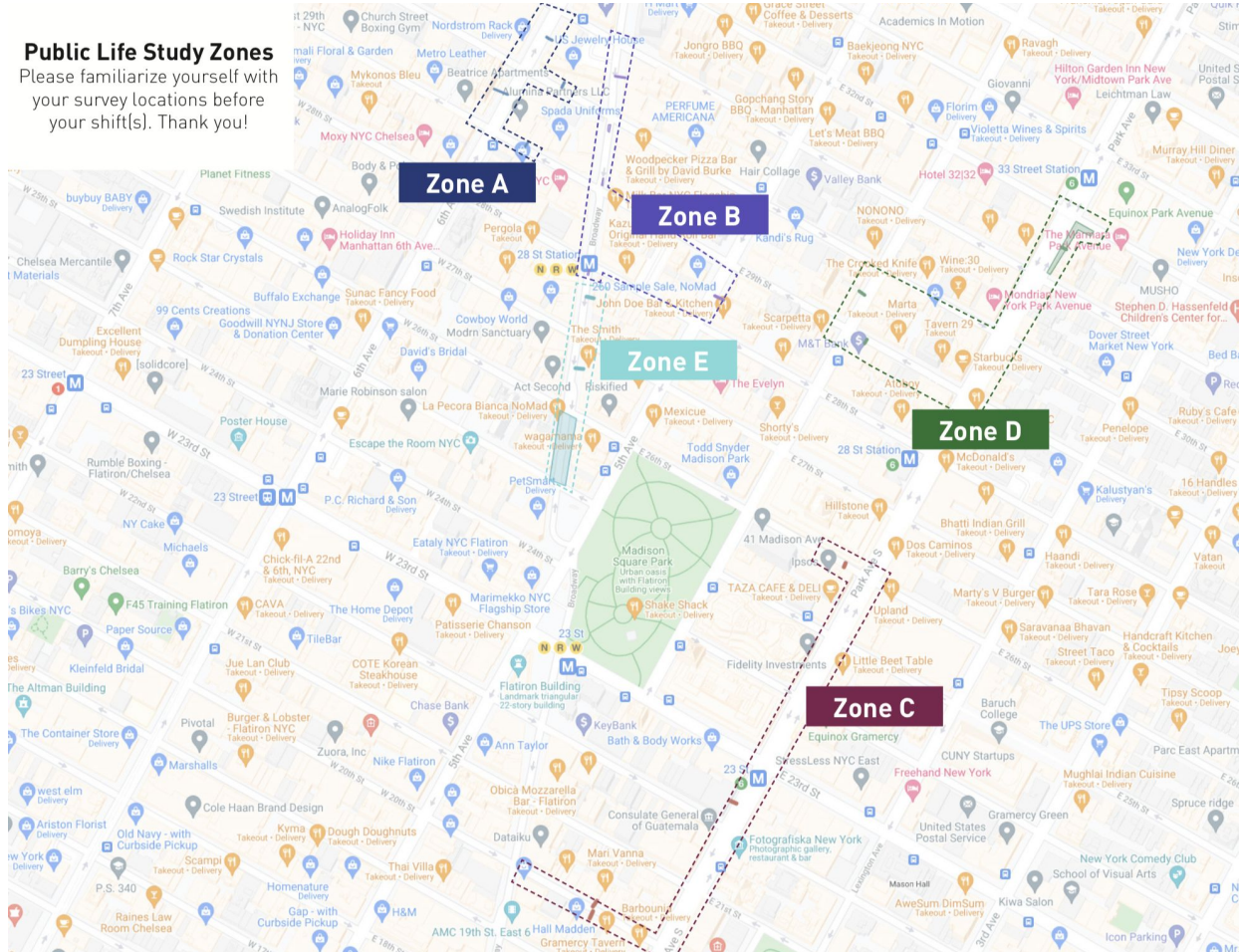
Observational study



PSPL Survey Map

25 surveyors collected data at 5 key points in the district, with intermittent counts at Madison Square Park, on one weekday (Thursday) and one weekend day (Saturday), between 8am-8pm and 10am-10pm, respectively

Public Life Study Zones
Please familiarize yourself with your survey locations before your shifts. Thank you!



The expansion area at a glance

Full of views!



Sometimes...

ONE
MADISON AVENUE

SL GREEN
REALTY CORP.



Canal St, Elmore & Madison Avenue

THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION
HAS ISSUED A STOP WORK ORDER
FOR THIS VIOLATION

MANDATORY AIR
RELEASES VALUE
REQUIRE BY 11:00 AM
ON 10/10/2020

NO STANDING
Anytime

Defined New York character



And redefining
New York
character



Old New York

oioie
IMPORT & WHOLESALE

Superior FLO R I S T S

828

New York's Leading Florist

828

559-1889

oioie
WHOLESALE

SYMPATHY
FLORAL
DESIGNS
WE
DELIVER

828
ACTIVE SIGNS INC. 2
8546140



Funeral
Designs
WEDDING
AND
EVENT
DESIGN
Specialists

828
REAL LOCAL FLORIST

And new New York



Active businesses,
outside



Active businesses, inside



And of many scales



A district with many types of workers

30% of people spending time in the district are workers (Placer 2021)



Office worker



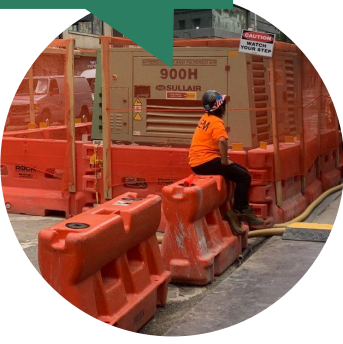
Remote worker



Very small business owner



Delivery workers



Construction workers

And visitors, from afar and from NYC

60% of Madison
Square Park visitors
are New Yorkers
(Gehl 2015)



Hotel guests



Business tourists



**Recreational
tourist**

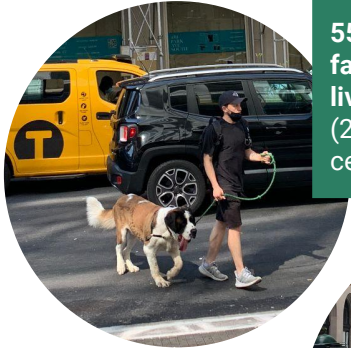


**New Yorkers on
the go**



**New Yorkers
stopping to stay**

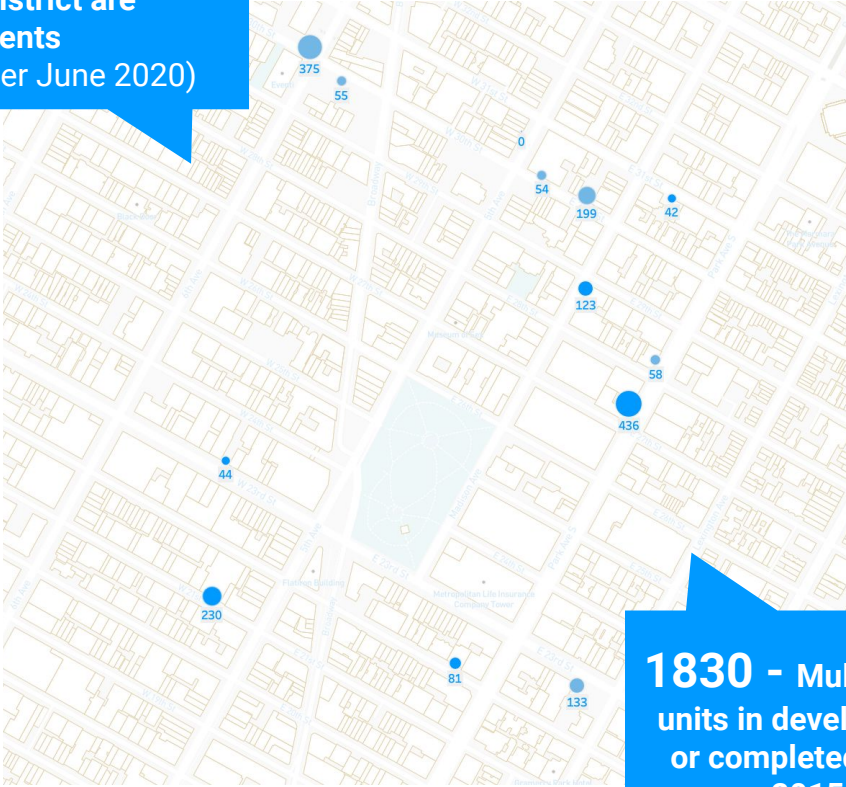
And one that is home to residents too



55.4% increase in families with children living in the area (2010 census to 2017 census)

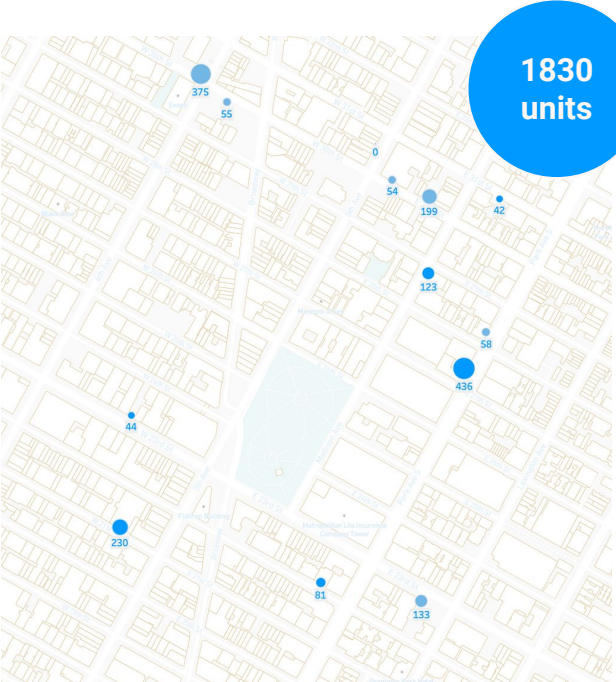


83% of people in the district are residents (Placer June 2020)

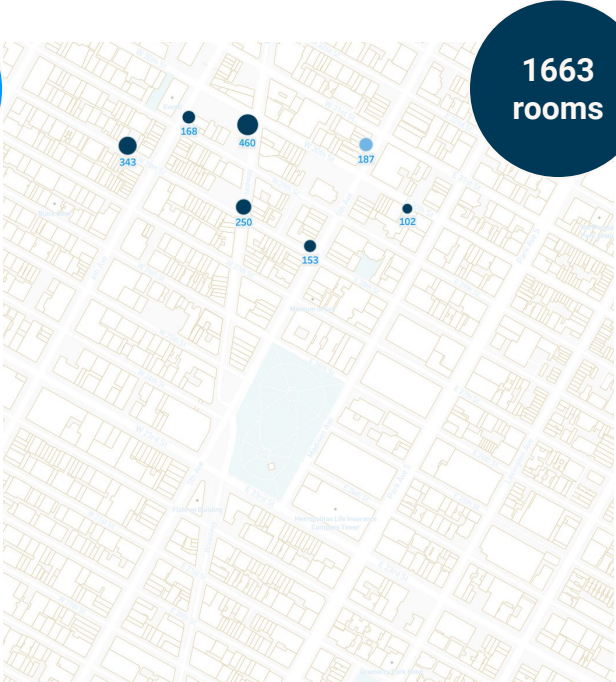


1830 - Multi-family units in development or completed since 2015

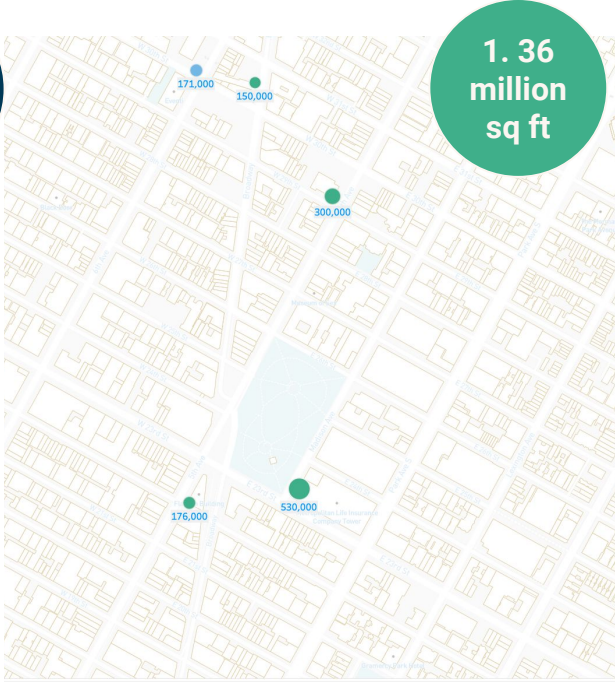
The BID is expanding and so is the neighborhood



Incoming residential



Incoming hospitality



Incoming office

An area defined by constant change

You can feel that this is a neighborhood in progress! Scaffolding is everywhere, there are 13 new developments in progress, people are coming and going, from hotels, offices, transit, and stores and roadbeds are being repurposed and reimagined. From the Broadway Plazas between 24th and 22nd streets, to 'Dining Streets' on Broadway between 25th-26th streets and 20th street, between Park and Broadway.

The expansion area is defined by its transformation.



A real New York Neighborhood

A business district that offers MORE...more historic character and quality of life offerings than FiDi, East Midtown, and Hudson Yards.

This neighborhood offers a mix of price points, from micro and luxury retail, to \$1 coffees at the cart to \$5 cappuccino at Ace hotel, to upscale outdoor dining to hamburgers in Madison Square Park.

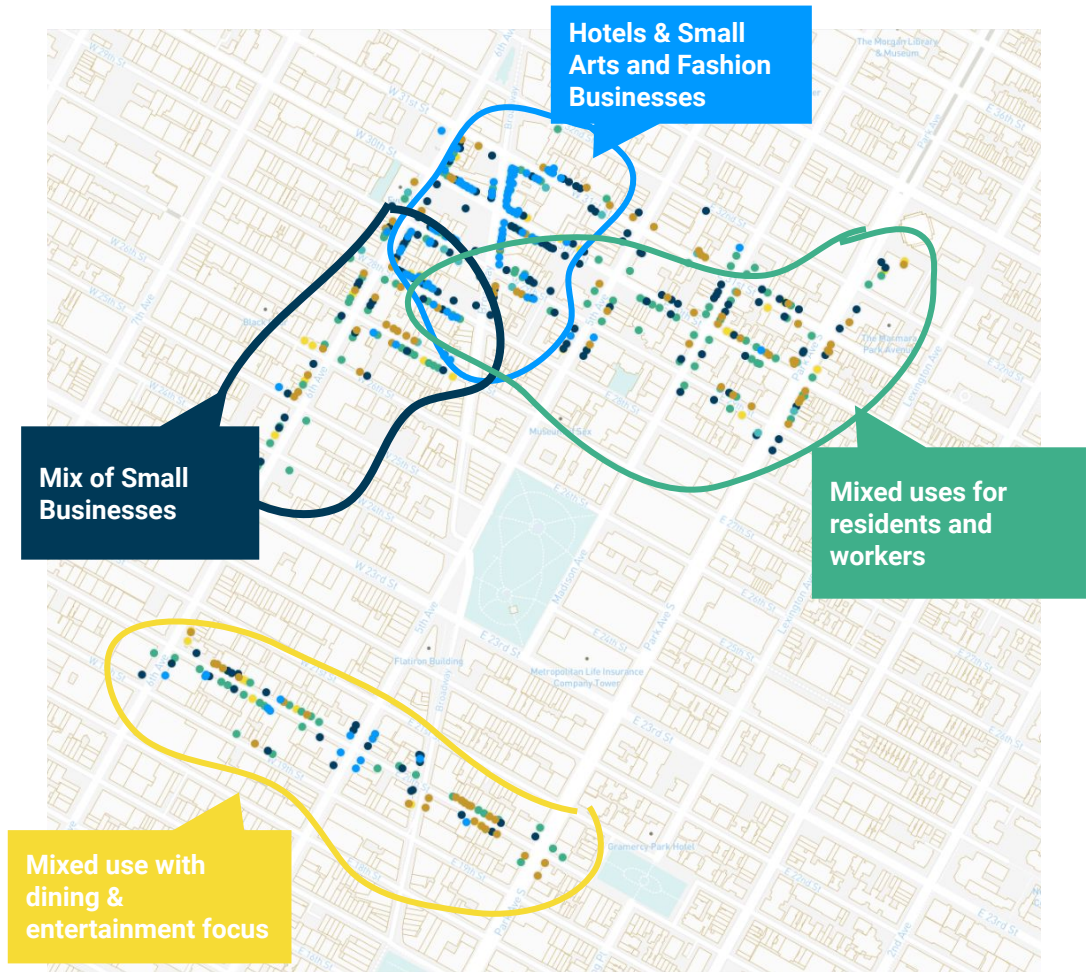


With real New York Businesses & Offerings

A mix of residential, commercial, retail, hotel, and dining – this area has it all.

From wholesale flower businesses to trendy New York restaurants, the expansion area has a wide range of commercial offerings for visitors, workers, and residents.

- Business Category (group)
- Arts & Culture, Entertainment, Fashion
 - Drinks & Food
 - Lodging
 - Misc
 - Services & Essentials
 - Wellness



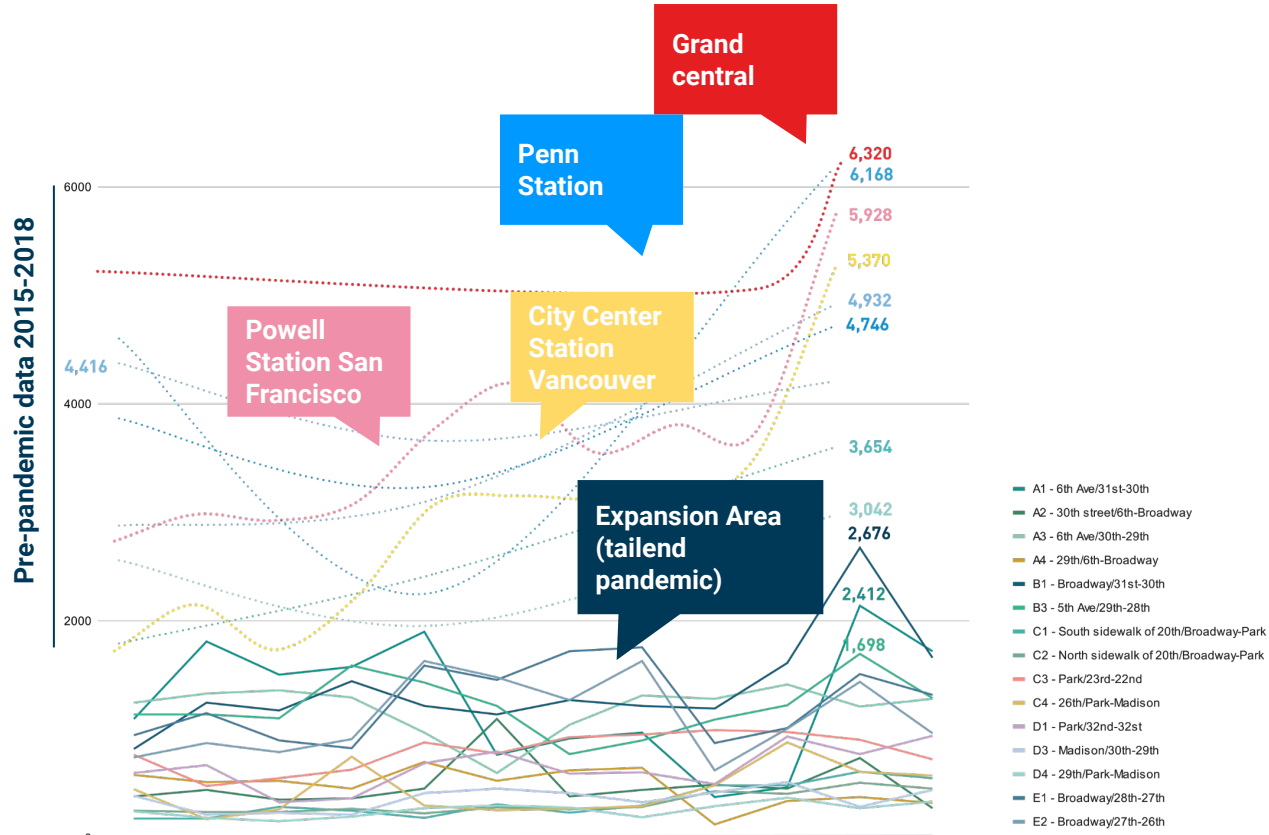
Public Space, Public Life Data A Snapshot

Snapshot

Overall, foot traffic in Flatiron is high

As one of the densest, most mixed use areas of NYC, with ample subway, bus and bike connections, foot traffic rivals that of major transit stations around the world.

Even with pandemic commuting numbers, the expansion area's pedestrian and cycling volumes are close to those in world class mass transit stations.

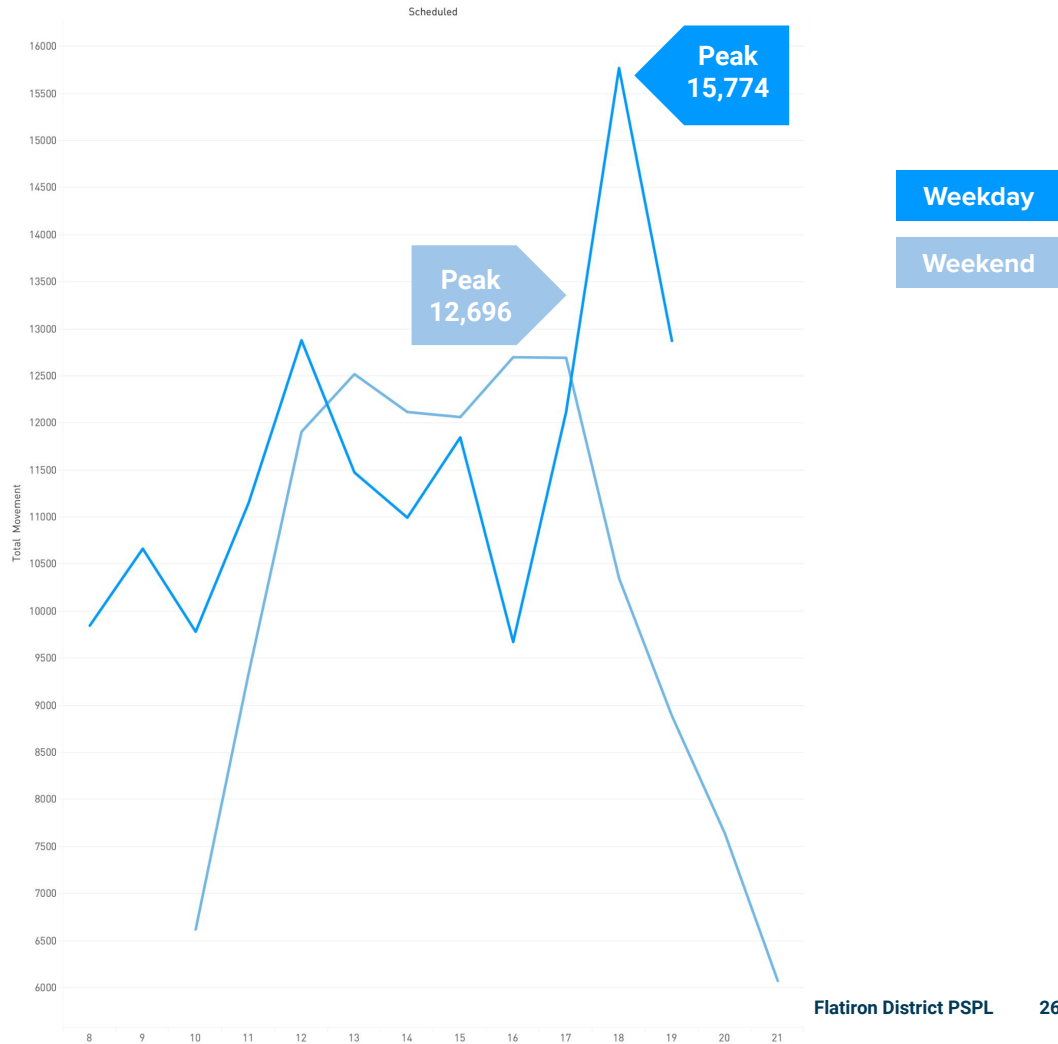


Snapshot

Weekdays out performing Weekends

The office worker crowd is back and sticking around for weekday happy hour.

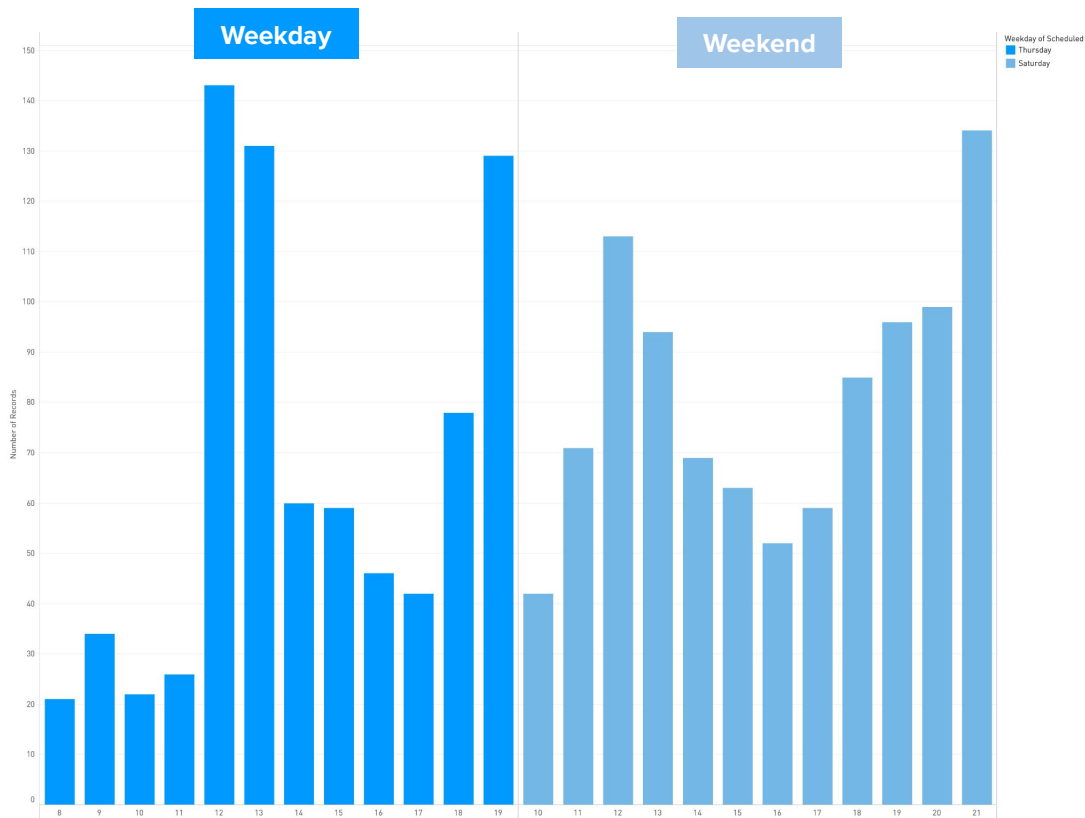
In the evenings and on the weekends, it appears fewer people choose to spend time in the area.



Snapshot

Saturdays see more consistent stationary activity, though peak volumes are higher on the weekday.

Weekday staying hinges on lunch time and happy hour - while on the weekend activity is more dispersed throughout the day.



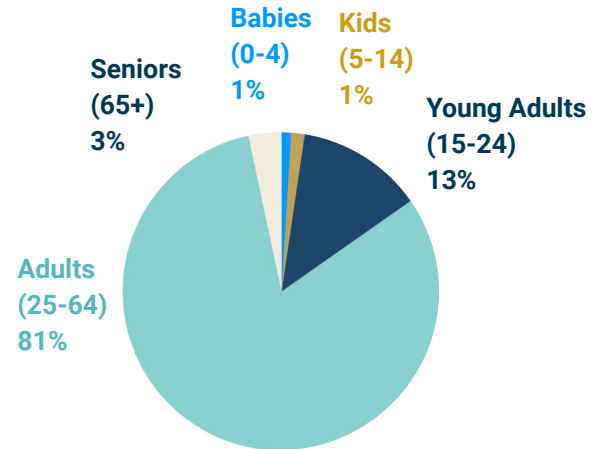
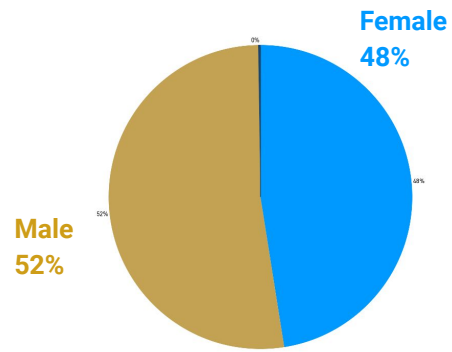
Snapshot

Gender representation is mostly equal but age diversity is lacking — especially considering neighboring public spaces.

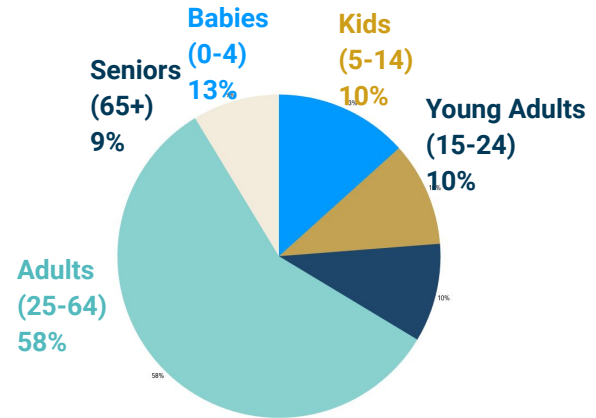
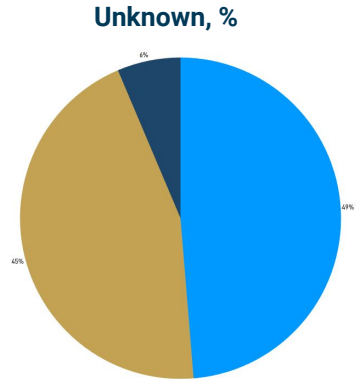
The district sees very few young children and seniors — but a significant amount of teens and young adults.

Data is from stationary activity, weekday and weekend combined. Lack of age diversity and gender split is also reflected in the movement data.

Public Life Survey Locations



Madison Square Park Snapshot

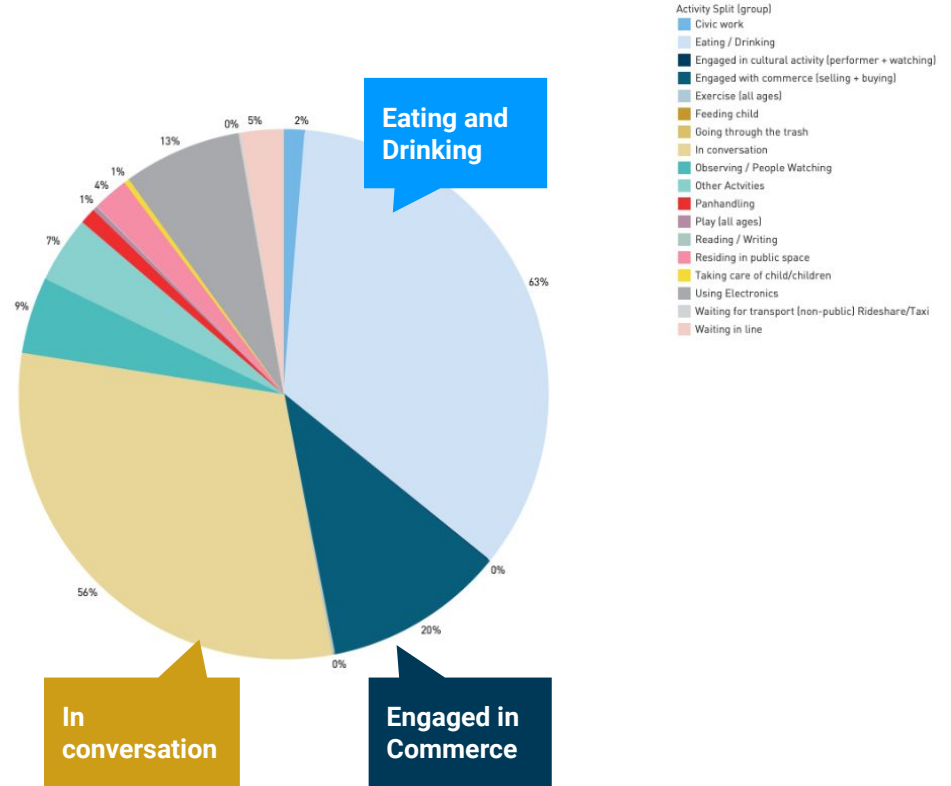


Snapshot

Activity is homogenous and centered around outdoor dining

There is not much activity outside pay-to-play activity like outdoor dining.

Data is from stationary activity, weekday and weekend combined.



It's all about Broadway

It's all about Broadway

The data tells a clear story — people want to be on Broadway

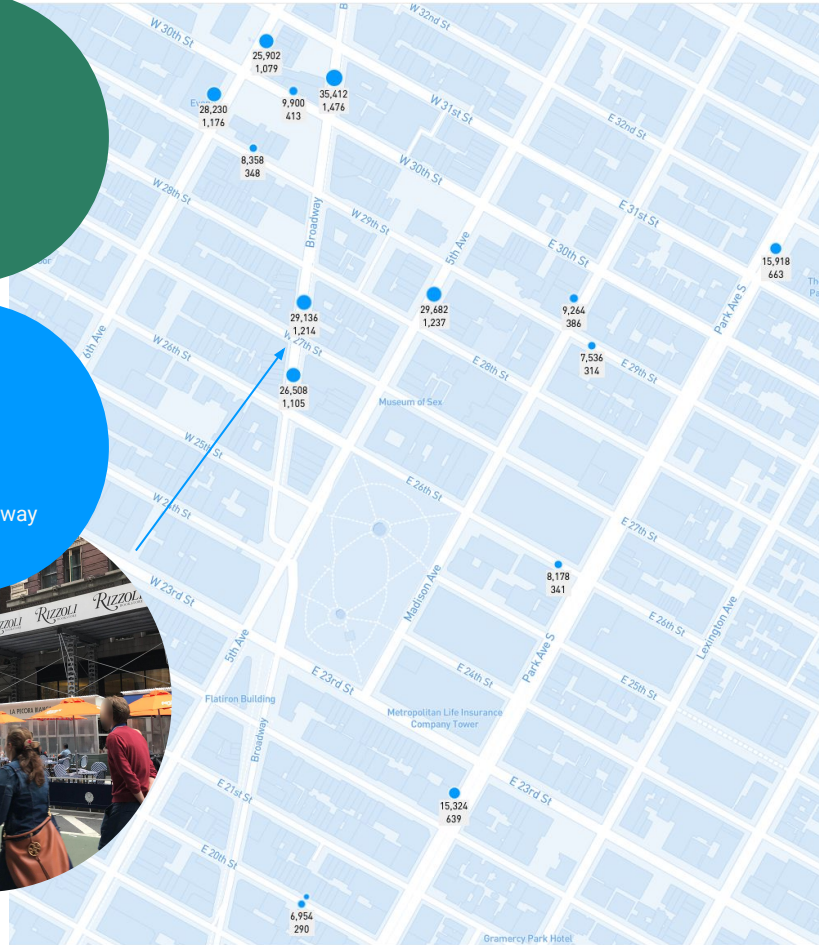
Broadway sees the highest movement volumes in the district.

Data is from movement counts. The first number is the total observed moving hourly, including all survey hours, both days. The number below represents the approximate hourly average.

Stickiness is calculated using the ratio of people moving by people staying

1 in 5
stop &
stay in
Times
Square

1 in 20
stop &
stay
25th & Broadway

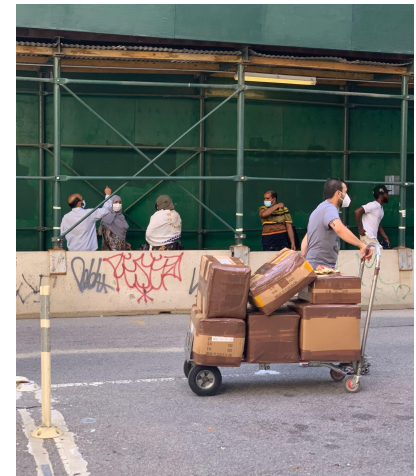
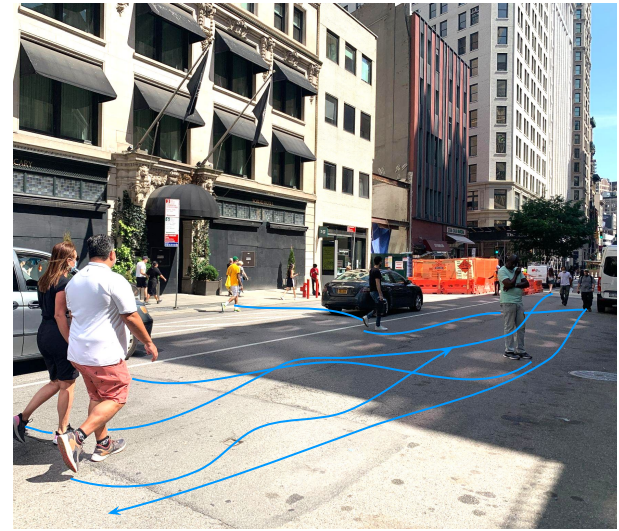
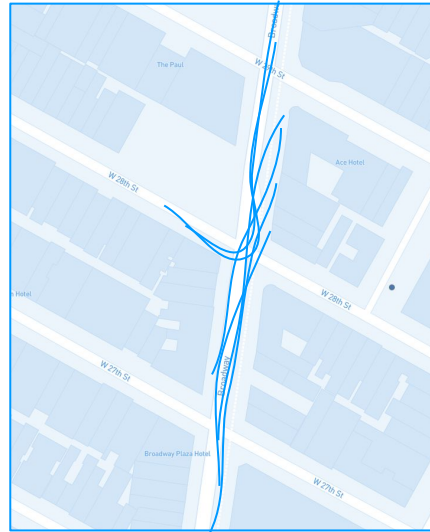


It's all about Broadway

People are using Broadway more like a plaza than a street.

Even where there are not street closures, people are walking in the street and using Broadway as if its a space for people – not cars.

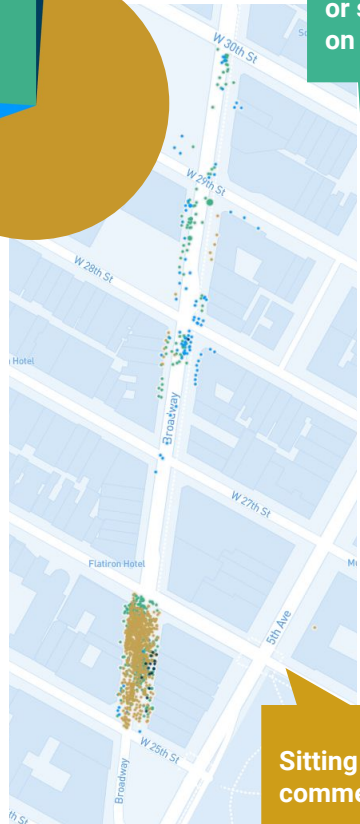
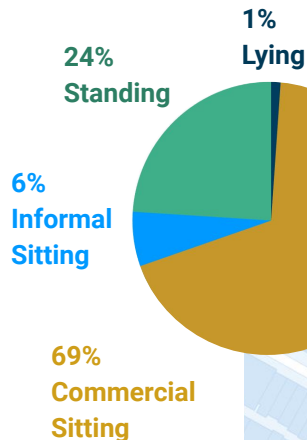
Data is from route tracing & observations throughout survey days.



It's all about Broadway

People want to be here, despite the lack of invitations

People are desperate for a seat. If we remove the outdoor dining block from the analysis – almost everyone is standing or sitting informally.



93% are standing or sitting informally on upper Broadway



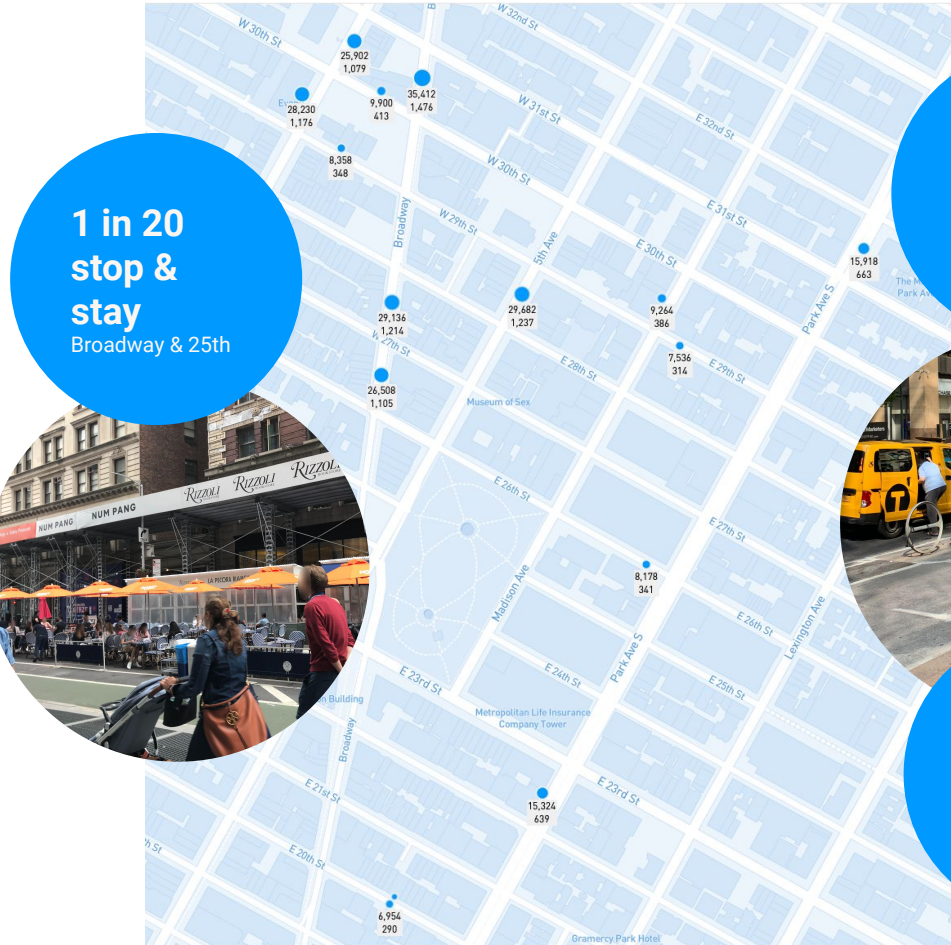
It's all about Broadway

Beyond Broadway, other streets in the district are 'necessary only'

The data from Park, Madison, Fifth, and 6th prove that people mostly have to be there for work, to enter a hotel, or to commute.

Data is from movement counts. The first number is the total observed moving hourly, including all survey hours, both days. The number below represents the approximate hourly average.

Stickiness is calculated using the ratio of people moving by people staying



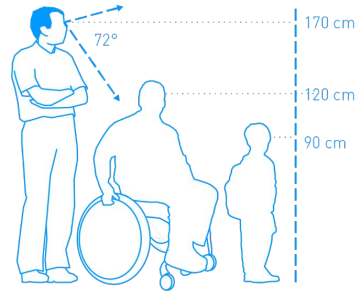
1 in 20 stop & stay
Broadway & 25th

1 in 32 stop & stay
Broadway & 28th-31st
**peak hour 3pm

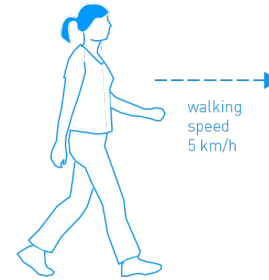


1 in 72 stop & stay
Park & 31st

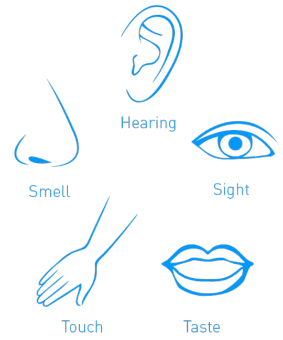
People respond well to environments that consider our human-scale



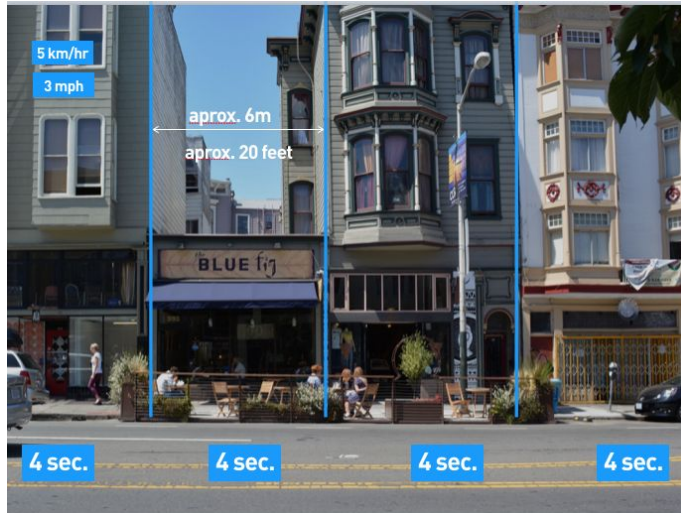
Average height



Average speed



5 Senses

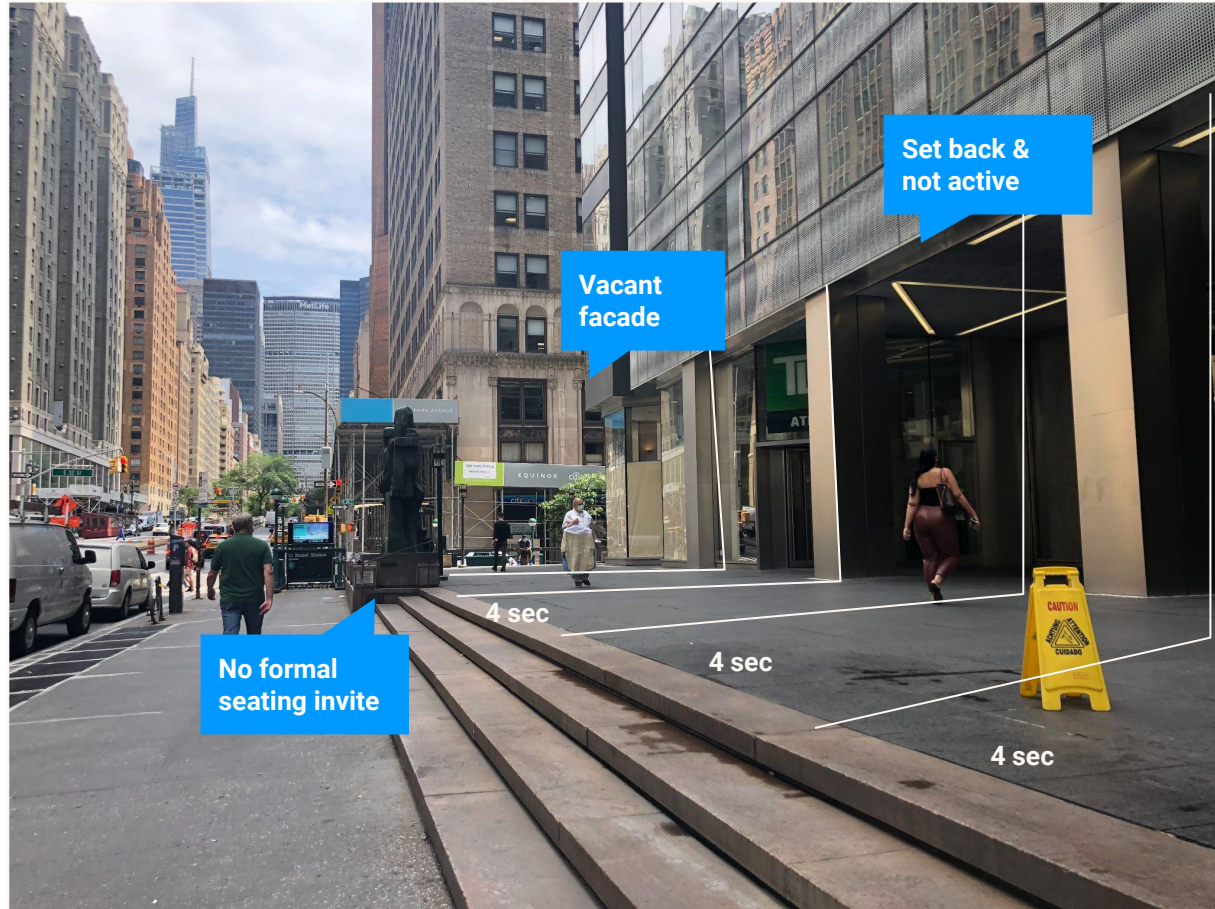


Need for Stimuli

It's all about Broadway

People won't spend time in places where they don't feel comfortable

1 in 72 stay
— Park & 31st



It's all about Broadway

The stimulating ground floor environment of Broadway makes the street a more inviting place to walk

1 in 32 stop & stay
— Broadway &
31st-28th

**peak hour 3pm



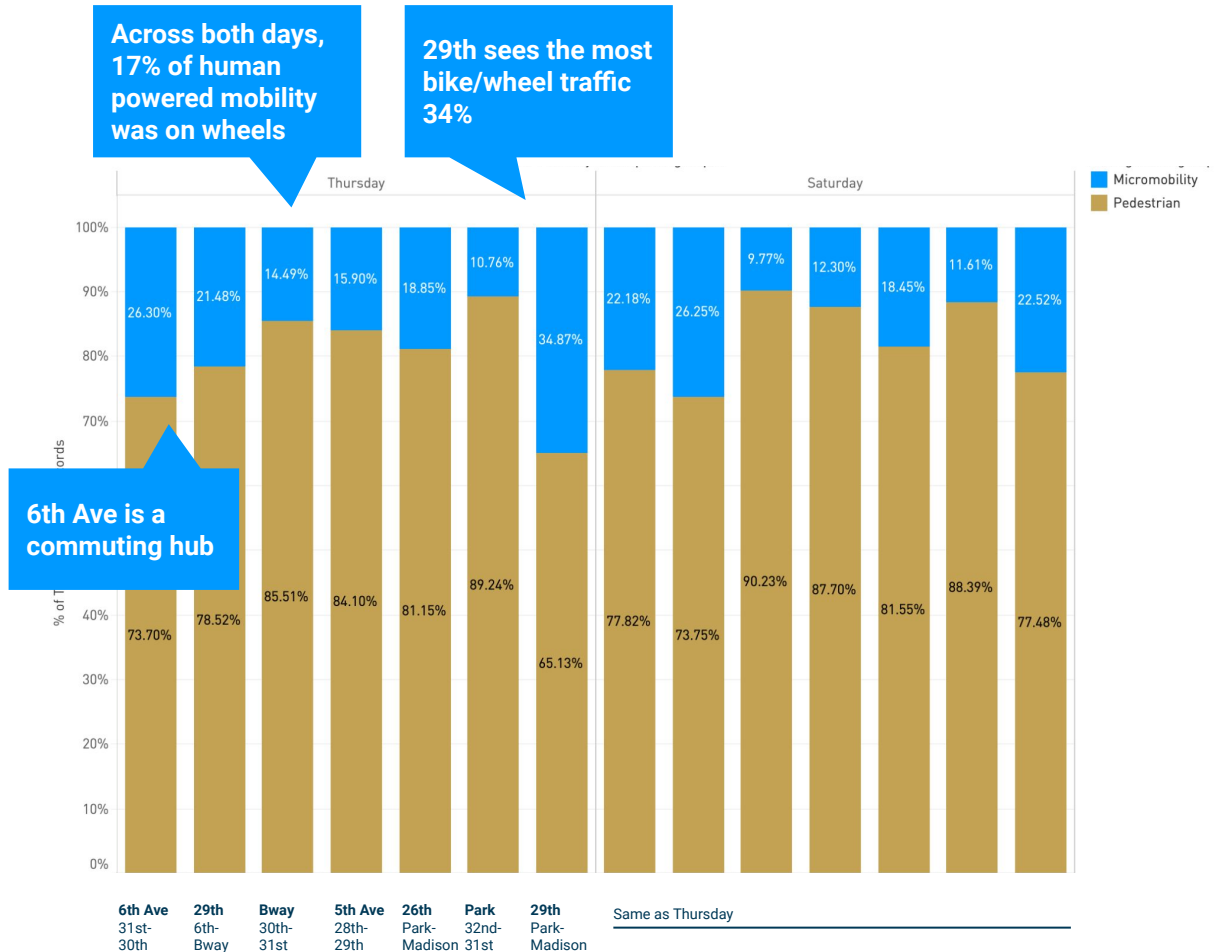
Micromobility has arrived!

Micromobility is here

Flatiron is a Micromobility Hub

The highest rates of biking were found on a street with a bike lane, 29th Street (34%) compared to the second highest (26%) which was also on 29th tied with 6th Avenue (26%)

Data is from movement counts. Thursday is shown on the left and Saturday is on the right side of the graph.



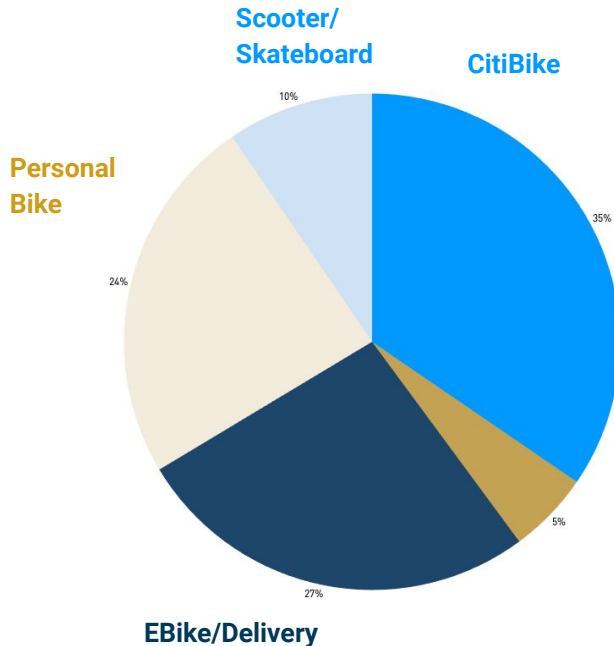
Micromobility is here

Flatiron is a Micromobility Hub

Citibikes, e-bikes/delivery bikes, and personal bikes are the preferred wheels to get around.

Delivery cyclists are not just prominent in movement patterns. We also observed them staying and waiting for fare.

Data is from movement counts, both days.

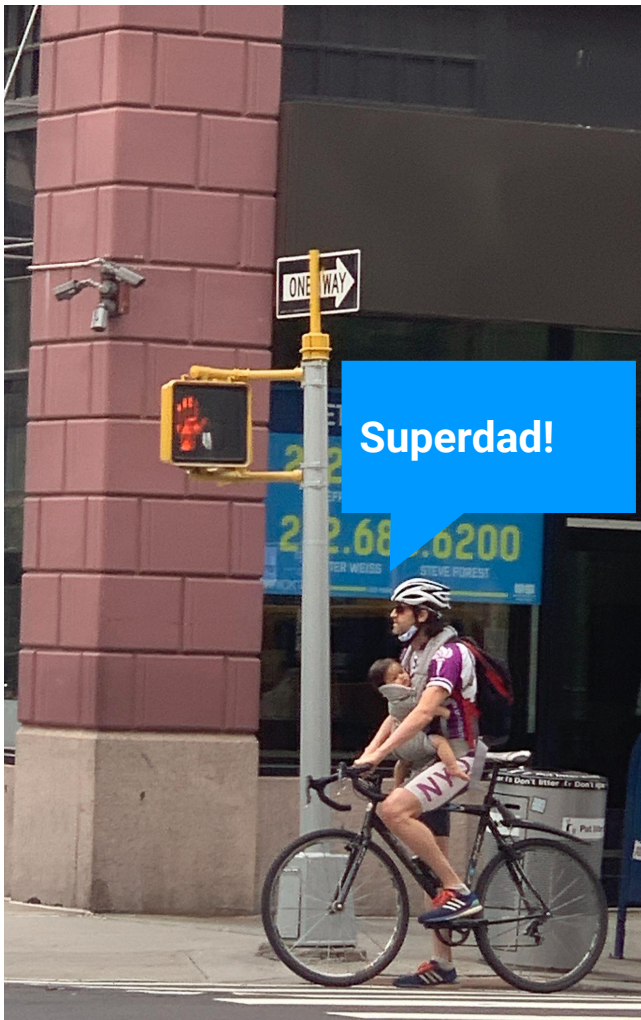


Citibikes are the preferred way to get around on wheels



Followed by deliver workers - 27%





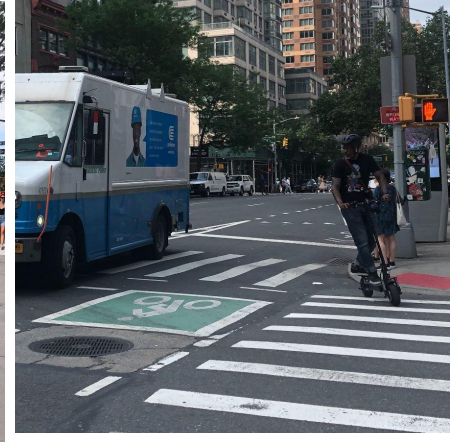
Bike parking doesn't match the demand

So many people on or with wheels, yet so few places to leave your ride – safely!



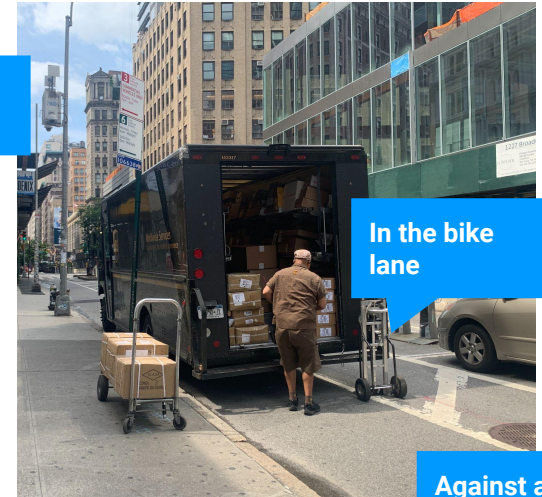
Walking and biking can be like competitive sports

Commuters are competing against cars, sanding in the intersection waiting to cross the street, weaving through cars, and watching for trucks – even in bike lanes!



The instant-delivery culture amplified by the pandemic is present

Delivery cyclists wait on streets and sidewalks for their next job, while other vendors rest on their handtrucks between shifts.



Flatiron is also a transit hub

The PSPL counts bike and foot traffic but we know there are many others commuting in and out of the district.



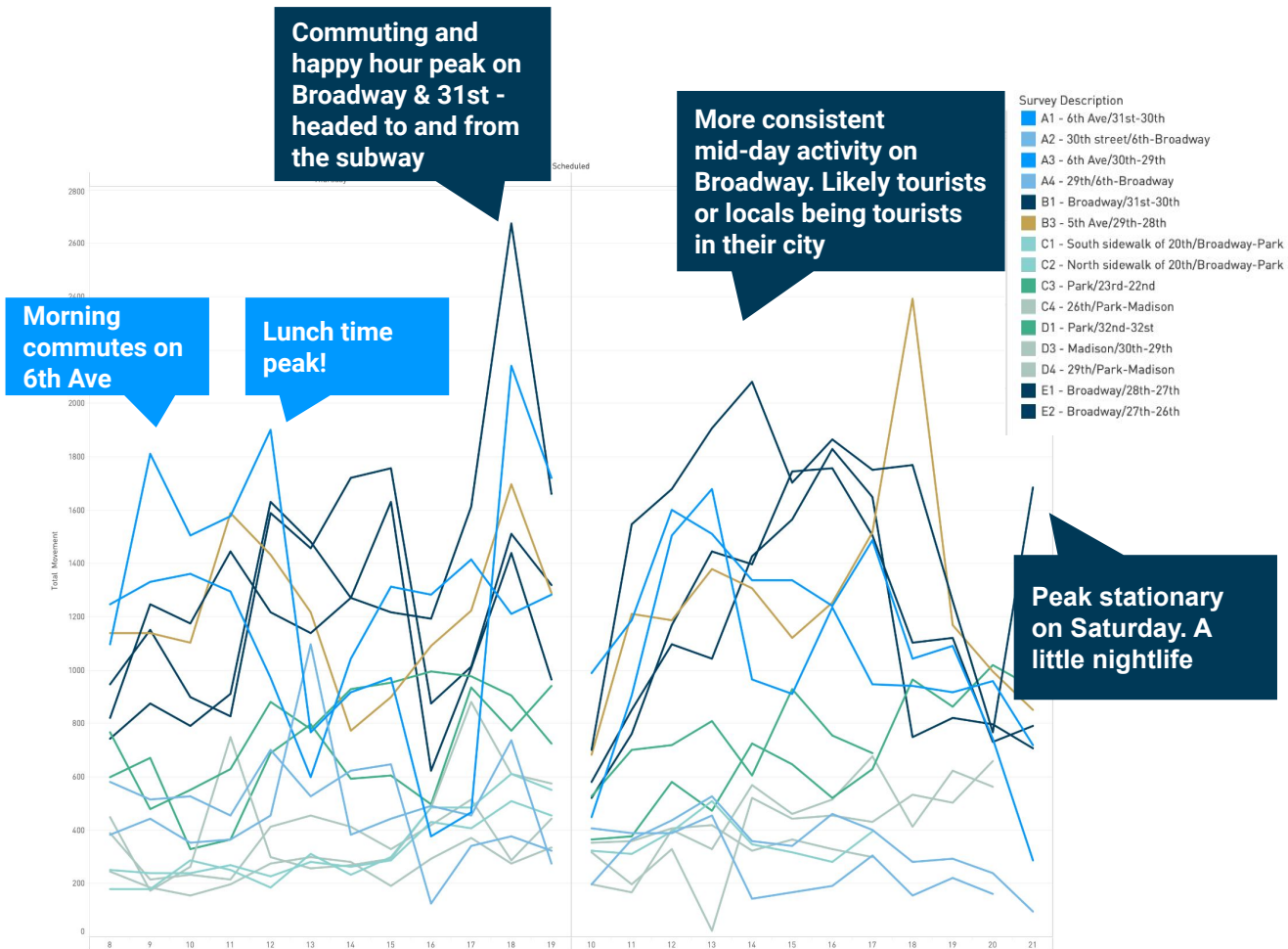
**Activity offer is
narrow, or at
least it seems
that way**

Activity offer is narrow

Weekdays are for the office worker and weekends cater to tourist traffic

The expansion area has an opportunity to fill gaps in the public life daily rhythm.

Data is from movement counts.

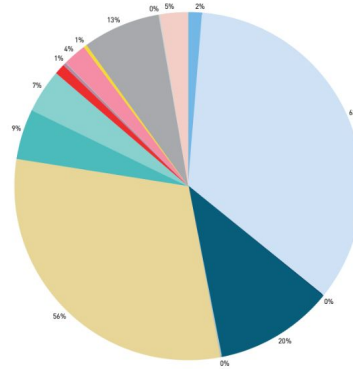


Activity offer is narrow

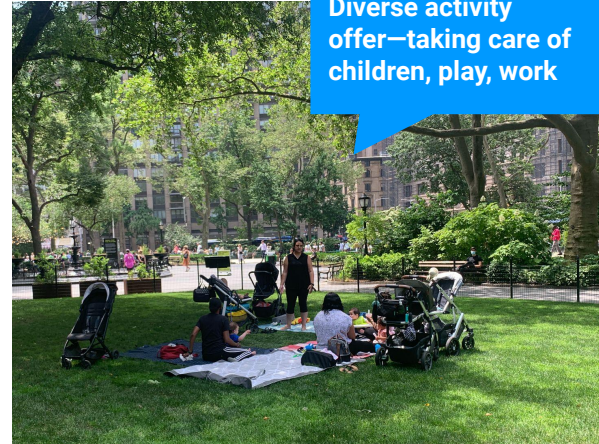
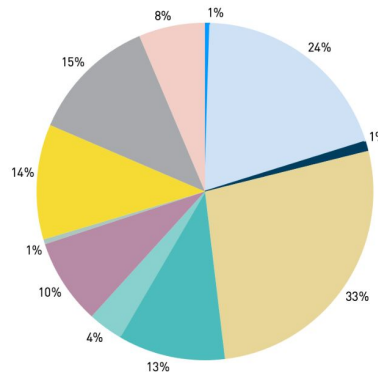
Public life profile is narrow

The districts activity mix is hinged on outdoor dining, but there is a latent desire for a wider variety of activities.

PSPL Survey Locations



Madison Square Park Snapshot



Activity Split (group)

- Changing diaper
- Eating / Drinking
- Engaged in cultural activity (performer + watching)
- In conversation
- Observing / People Watching
- Other Activities
- Play (all ages)
- Reading / Writing
- Taking care of child/children
- Using Electronics
- Waiting in line

Activity offer is narrow

Flatiron is a launch pad to so many New York gems. But it's hard to know that on the ground.

The District is within walking distance of so many New York neighborhoods and attractions but there is no wayfinding or signage to direct you or communicate proximity.



Is this New York City?

Where do I go from here?



52%
of people spending time in
the district are visitors
(Placer 2020)

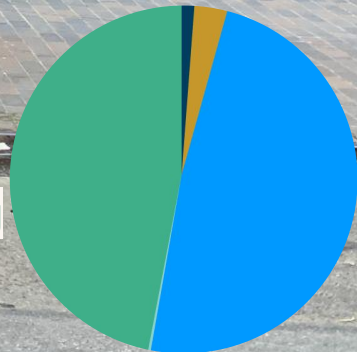
Safety & comfort need a boost



NO STANDING
7am - 7pm
Except Sunday
→
3 Hours
Metered
Parking
**COMMERCIAL
VEHICLES ONLY**
Monday - Friday
8am - 7pm
←

The Roosevelt Birthplace
Historic Site
National U.S. Department of the Interior

28



48%
**Informal
Sitting**

47%
Standing





CHAPS & CO

WE'RE HIRING BARBERS

JOE THE JUICE

HIGGS
SPICY & LOZENGE

ST. MARKS PROJECT
1000 10TH AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10018

CAUTION
WATCH YOUR STEP

CM

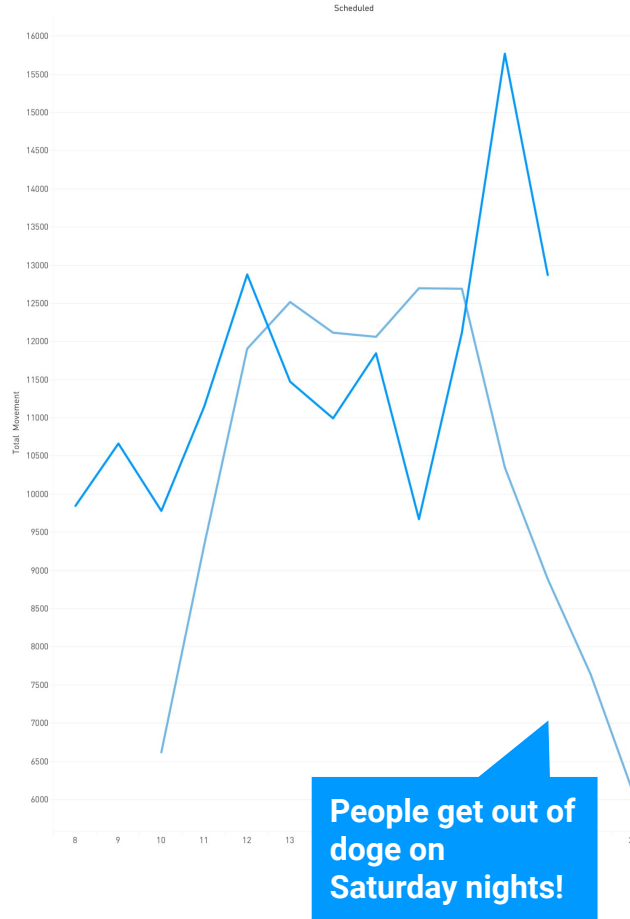
Public Space
1000 10TH AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10018
212.684.7973
SULLAIR

Safety and comfort need a boost

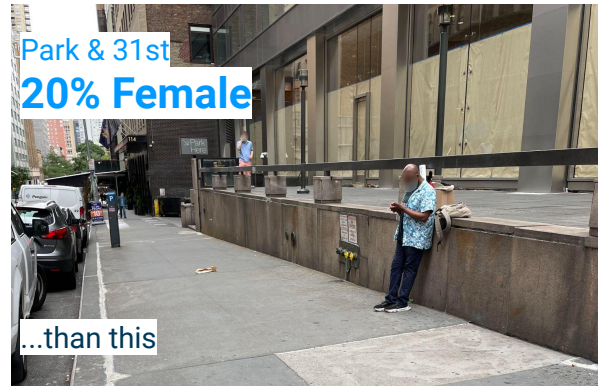
Saturday nights don't always feel safe

Eyes on the street aren't everything but they certainly help. Number of people spending time and in particular, the presence of women at night can be an indicator of safety.

While Flatiron Partnership survey respondents indicate they feel safe, supplementing surveys with an eye level understanding helps to paint a more complete picture



Saturday Night, 8pm



Looking Ahead

Strategies for a People First District

**From a
convenient
pit stop**

**To a
magnetic
destination**

**From a free
for all on
the
streets...**

**To the best
place to
walk and
bike in
Manhattan**

**From an 9-6,
office-worker
haven**

**To a 12+
hour, local
New York
gem**

**From a place
under
construction**

**To one leading
the way for the
next wave of
people-first
transformations**

Key Strategies

Improve Creature Comforts

Public seating, shade, traffic calming, greenery, and lighting are essential

Double Down on Broadway

Continue to celebrate Broadway as a place for people & move the needle on eliminating cars from Broadway.

Diversify the Public Life Offer

A true mix of tourists, workers, residents, and local tourists — the expansion area should offer something for everyone

Lead the Way with Micromobility

Flatiron is a commuting hotspot & leading the way with new mobility in New York. Be innovative in providing for New Yorkers on wheels.

Celebrate the Small and Unpredictable

Local businesses bring urban quality and New York character to the area (but also help people know where they are)

Celebrate the diversity of users in this district

From our public life study and background research, we see a few character areas with unique users to focus on when implementing these strategies.

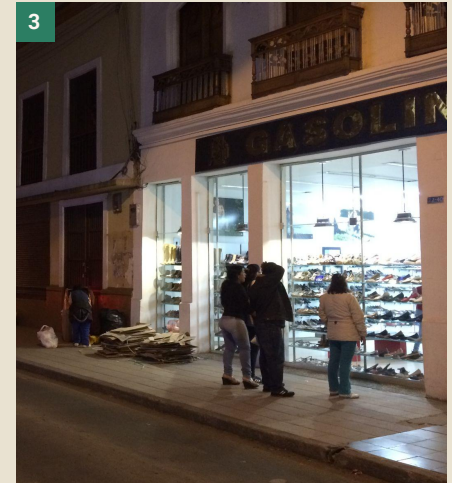
For example: improving creature comforts on Park Ave might be more focused on better crossings to help people get home and to work while on 5th Ave it might be more about orienting tourists.



Improve Creature Comforts

A lot of people move through this district everyday. Make moving and staying throughout the district more comfortable—protect people from the elements (noise, smells, sun) and traffic. Ensure that people feel safe and comfortable commuting through the expansion area at all times and feel invited to stay and spend time.

1. Increase public seating.
2. Install curb extensions at busy intersections.
3. Increase street lighting and encourage open businesses to light the street after hours.
4. Introduce more greenery and shade.



Improve Creature Comforts

Construction and continual growth is part of the district — don't treat it as temporary. Celebrate this district as an area that is constantly improving itself with simple improvements to construction sites.

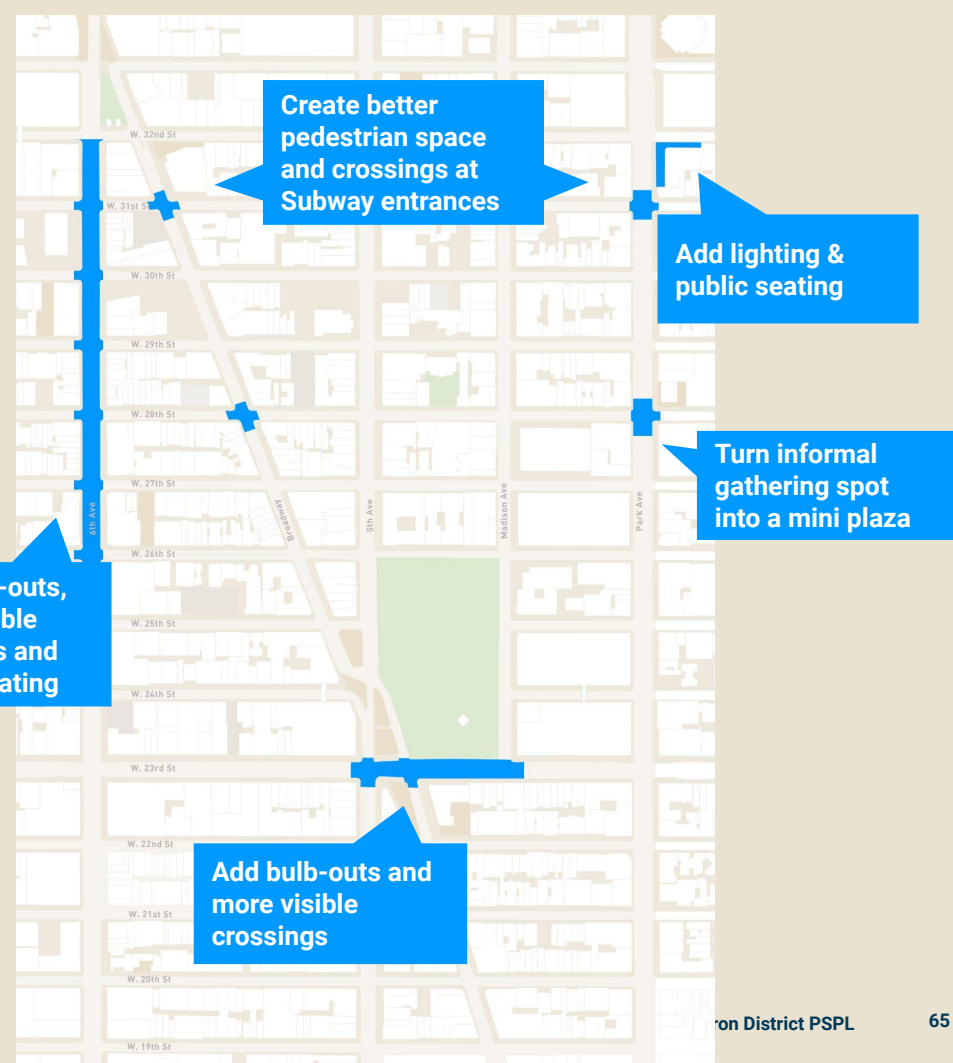
1. Scaffolding is already a lifeline for shade and seating. Formalize it with add-on lean bars and seating.
2. Give people construction visibility. Enhance scaffolding with graphic wayfinding..Use destination based wayfinding to encourage people to continue on foot or by bike
- 3.



Improve Creature Comforts

This strategy is district wide but key places to start include:

- 6th Ave between 26th & 31st streets
- Park Ave at 31st (crossing & plaza)
- Park Ave at 28th
- Broadway at 31st
- Broadway at 28th
- 23rd between Broadway & Madison



Improve Creature Comforts

We observed many people fighting against car traffic. Improving creature comforts is about prioritizing the human experience over the vehicular one.



Double Down on Broadway

Broadway is already acting as an open street, people want to spend time here. Formalize the offer beyond outdoor dining with programmatic invitations to make the case for further pedestrianization.

1. Short-term: Use paint to encourage and formalize the use of the street as pedestrian thoroughfare.
2. Short-term: Work with DOT for more block closures.
3. Increase public seating.
4. Enhance people space at transit stops on 28th and 23rd.
5. Improve wayfinding to other parts of district and NYC.
6. Long-term: Develop permanent design.

Gehl



Double Down on Broadway

Celebrate what's already working and add on to Broadway's success by providing more pedestrian space at gateways and subway entrances, seating and greenery, and extra invitations on existing street closures. Focus areas include:

- Crossing at 31st
- Crossing at 28th
- Medians between 31st-28th
- Outdoor dining block between 26th-25th

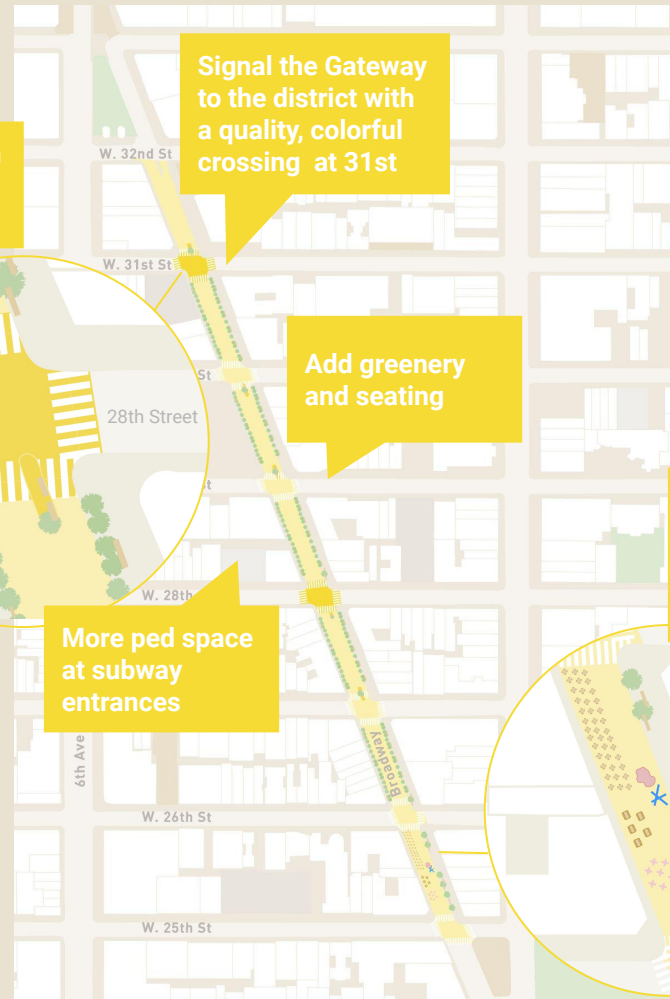
Formalize median seating with simple benches

Signal the Gateway to the district with a quality, colorful crossing at 31st

Add greenery and seating

More ped space at subway entrances

Celebrate wins & add-onto outdoor dining with public seating & play opportunities



Celebrate the Small and Unpredictable

Small businesses maintain the fine-grain urban quality and bring some of old New York character to the expansion area. Support the foot traffic these businesses generate with more walking space to relieve any pinch points.

1. Work with DOTs Cargo bike program to implement a Cargo bike corral.
2. Add temporary micro ramps to ease loading.
3. Formalize the loading areas to protect cyclists.
4. Consider micro-grants for facade improvements.

DOT pilot program



1

Also helps cyclists!



2

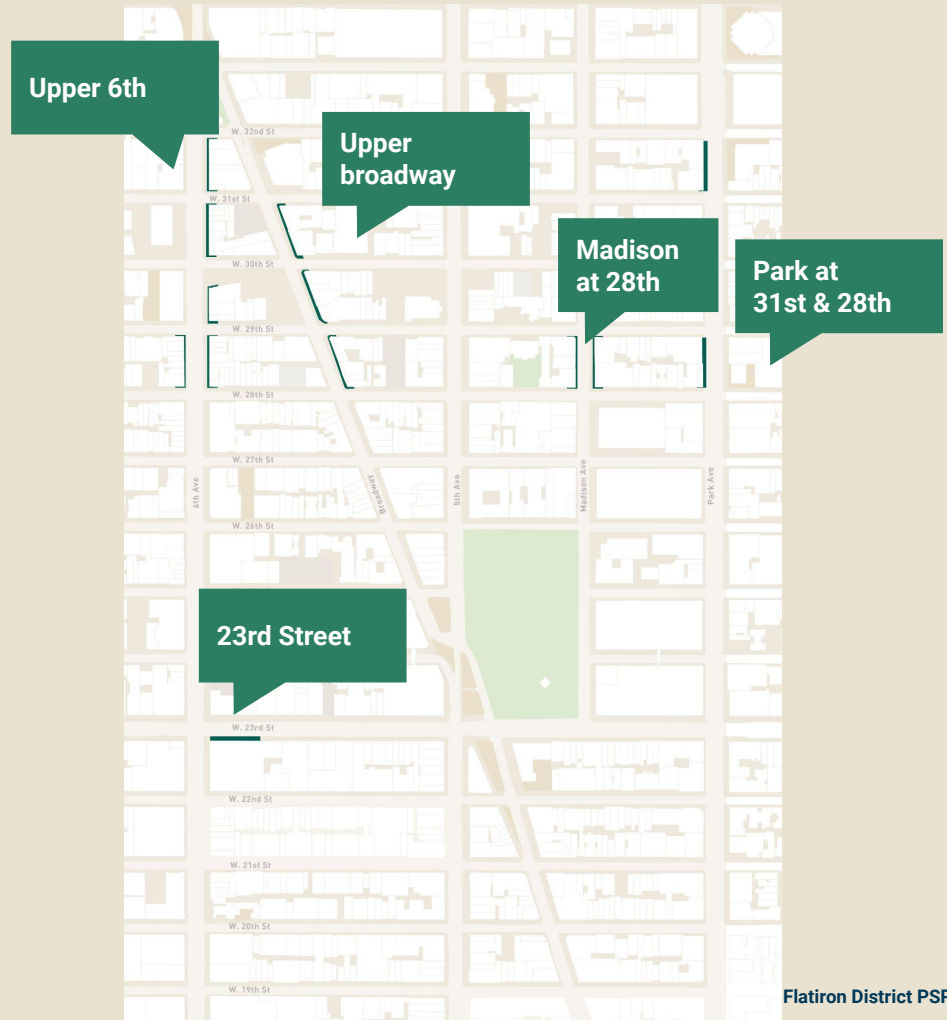


3

Celebrate the Small and Unpredictable

Focus on the small businesses that give the neighborhood character. Make loading logistically easier for them and help eliminate crowding by keeping sidewalks clutter & loading mayhem. Focus areas include:

- 6th Ave between 31st-28th
- Broadway Between 31st-28th
- 23rd Street
- Madison at 28th Street
- Park Avenue at 31st and 28th

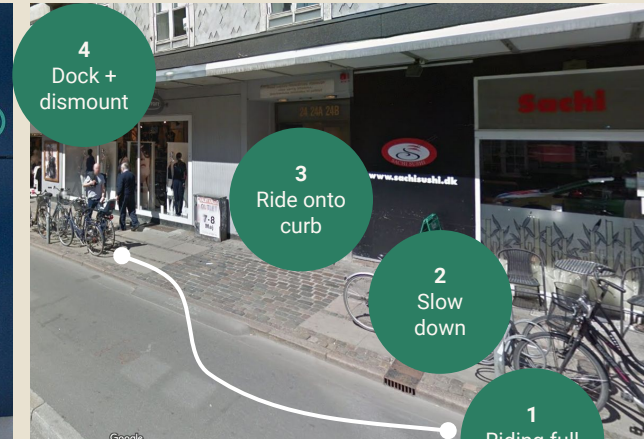


Lead the Way with Micromobility

Flatiron is a commuting hotspot & leading the way with new mobility in New York. Be innovative in providing for New Yorkers on wheels.

1. Celebrate cycling in New York with extra, everyday bicycling comforts.
2. Provide e-bike charging areas.
3. Consider public parklets or mobility hubs to double as waiting zones with bike parking for delivery workers and everyday cyclists.
4. Introduce bike micro-ramps.
5. Work with business owners making deliveries by bike, or interested in making this switch.
6. Work with delivery union/biz that have a lot of delivery to understand their needs.

Gehl



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Lead the Way with Micromobility

Improve the experience of getting around on wheels for all New Yorkers and consider going above and beyond for cargo and delivery cyclists. Potential micromobility hub locations include:

- 29th Street between Madison & Park
- Broadway between 31st and 29th
- Park Ave and 26th
- Broadway between 22nd and 20th

Provide everyday cycling comforts

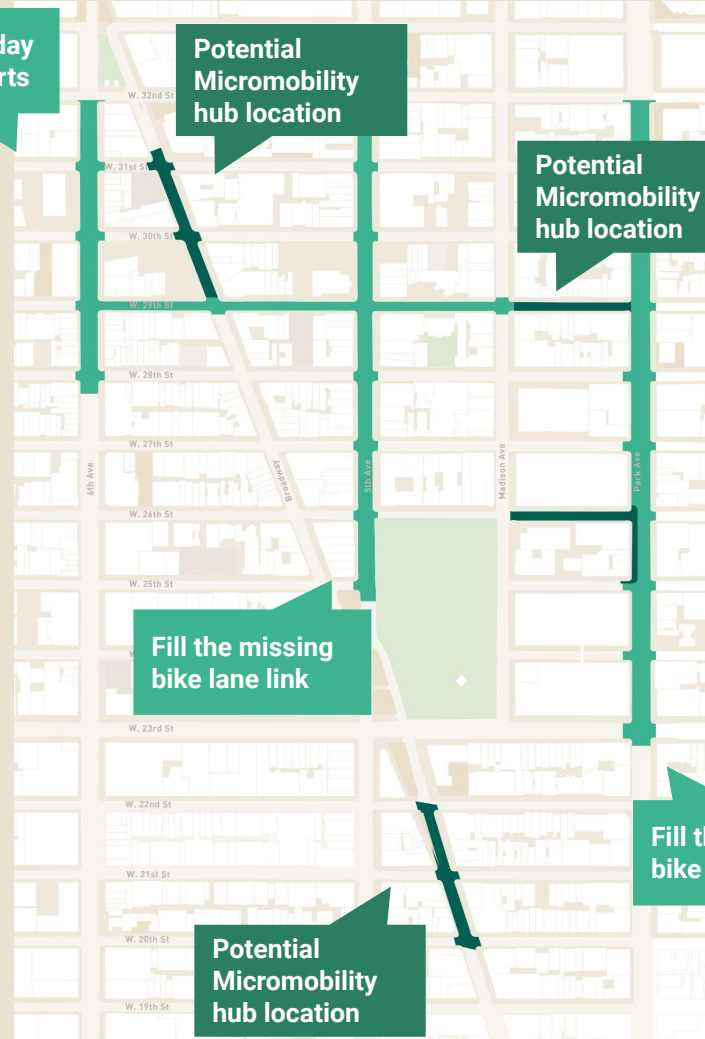
Potential Micromobility hub location

Potential Micromobility hub location

Fill the missing bike lane link

Fill the missing bike lane link

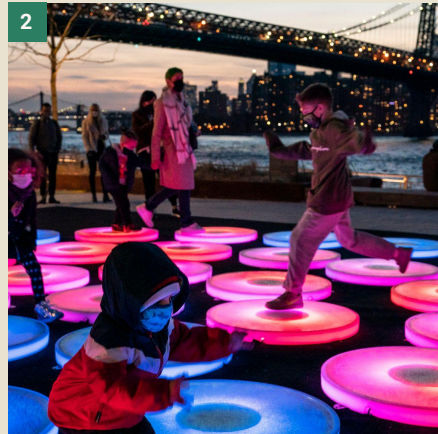
Potential Micromobility hub location



Diversify Public Life Offer

A true mix of tourists, workers, residents, and local tourists – the expansion area should offer something for everyone, at all times. Use programming to start putting the area on people’s mental map as a weekend and nighttime destination. Consider a variety of tenant types and operating hours moving forward.

1. Make residents visible. Partner with schools & daycares for a family oriented open streets event.
2. Prioritize interactive art installations with a night time draw.
3. Consider a rotation of smaller community events.
4. Incentivize retail businesses & institutions to spill into the street.



Provide for all kinds of Flatiron Workers

Flatiron is home to many different kinds of workers. From office commuters to construction workers to laptop-in-the-park people, consider how these users are being accommodated.

1. Keep informal seating in mind.
2. Consider other amenities like charging stations, lean comfort, and handwashing stations & affordable, quick food
3. Acknowledge Flatiron as a business and learning district with a rotating calendar of knowledge sharing & skill building.
4. Bring back the outdoor work spaces.

Many construction workers might not take a formal seat but will rest when informal & leaning options are provided



Piloting Change

Start on the
Strategies Today

It's important to distinguish Pilots from Creative or 'Tactical' Urbanism

Pilots are guided by strategy.

Low hanging fruit or a genuine test?



Pilots can...

- 1/ Inform Long term change
- 2/ Actively engage and invite people to vote with their feet
- 3/ Create something while we wait
- 4/ Help people imagine what's possible
- 5/ Point us to what we didn't imagine

Approach to Piloting

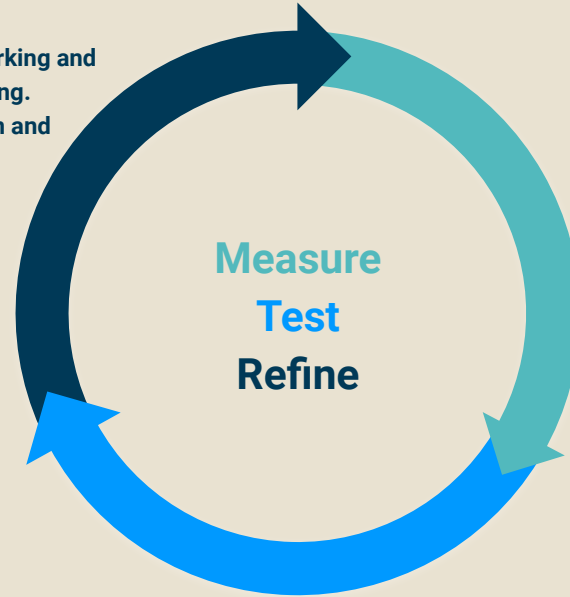
Great public spaces are never finished. Take a measure-test-refine approach to pressure test ideas, engage people, get feedback, and constantly improve.

REFINE

Study what's working and what's not working. Continually learn and improve.

MEASURE

Continue to measure public life and public space conditions with more specific goals/questions



TEST

Pilot some recommendations to try things out, ask people to 'vote with their feet', and make the case for permanent change

Public Life Metrics of Success / Benchmarking Criteria — for Pilots and Beyond

Metric	Method
Increase in people walking	Public Life Survey
Increase in people using wheels	Public Life Survey
Increase in % of female cyclists	Public Life Survey
Increase in females spending time, especially at night	Public Life Survey
Increase in children and seniors spending time	Public Life Survey
Maintain the % of young adults spending time	Public Life Survey
Increase activity diversity	Public Life Survey
Boost overall public life on weekends and evenings	Public Life Survey
Decrease in people standing	Public Life Survey
Increase in people sitting on public seating	Public Life Survey
Increased reports of safety at night, especially by women	Intercept Surveys

Next Steps

Next Steps

1. Engage
 - a. Determine core stakeholder group, including DOT and other relevant city agencies
 - b. Present findings
2. Prioritize
 - a. Facilitate prioritization workshop with core stakeholders, identify what strategies and pilots to focus on, and where
3. Develop and Implement Pilots
4. Measure Impact
 - a. Conduct follow-up public life study to gather data on impacts of pilots or other interventions by the Partnership. Focus on gateways and nodes to understand the return of public life to the district in September
 - b. Additionally, locations of a fall 2021 or future public life study should correspond to focus or pilot areas identified in the strategies

Additional opportunities

Public Life Analysis

- Continue the public life analysis by layering in additional data sets, collected by the Partnership, city agencies, and partners. This can help to identify more nuanced stories about how the district is used today by specific demographic groups, such as residents, and how patterns will change with the expansion and the 13 in-progress developments.

Partnership Development

- Identify partners who can help bring the strategies to life. Begin sharing the findings and ideas with them and developing a cohort of partners that may be able to make this work actionable.

Thank you!