

# Places for People

**A Public Realm Vision Plan  
for East Midtown**



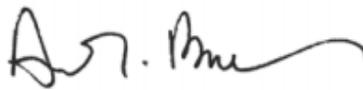
**East Midtown  
deserves a public  
realm as iconic  
as its buildings**

Dear Fellow New Yorkers:

To create world-class streets, cities must design their streetscapes as vibrant destinations that improve travel and mobility. Since the construction of Grand Central Terminal one hundred years ago, the street network around the Terminal has evolved to meet the changing needs of East Midtown. Today, we need to refresh our world-class business district to meet the needs of the twenty-first century.

Places for People represents a collaborative effort among the New York City Departments of Transportation and City Planning, local stakeholders, Jonathan Rose Companies, Gehl Architects, Skanska, and the Office of the Mayor to re-envision East Midtown's public realm. This report proposes projects and guidelines to shape an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders about ways to enhance the public realm, and begins the smart investment of public resources needed to implement this community-driven vision.

We look forward to a future that builds on the incredible assets of East Midtown and strengthens it as an iconic business district and twenty-first century neighborhood.



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Amanda M. Burden, FAICP  
Commissioner



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Janette Sadik-Khan  
Commissioner

# Our Vision

How can we make sure that East Midtown, an iconic business district, evolves to meet the needs of the next century?

In the last several decades, amid this City's incredibly dense built environment, New Yorkers have created, reclaimed and reconceived iconic public places in all five boroughs. Few could have imagined the transformative effect that the High Line, the East River Esplanade, Times Square, or Brooklyn Bridge Park would have in enriching the livability of their respective neighborhoods. To put it simply: to improve the quality of civic life, you must improve the quality of public space.

This report presents a community-driven vision and identifies three strategies to guide the transformation of East Midtown's public realm.

## A Grand Entrance to New York City

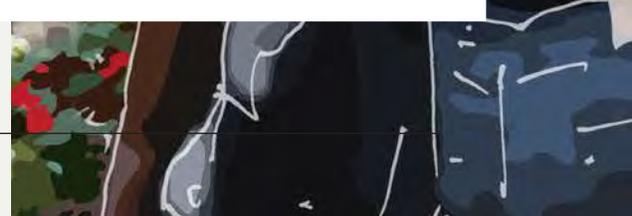
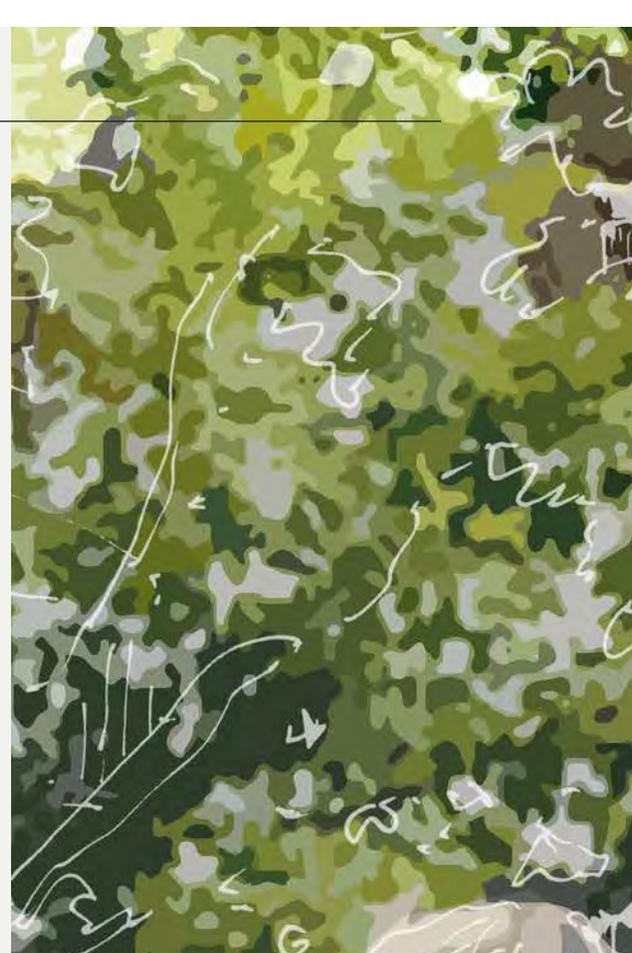
Grand Central Terminal is East Midtown's jewel. Our vision is to create a setting of high-quality public spaces that will connect with and complement the Terminal. A series of flexible design interventions could create new opportunities for gathering, working, relaxing, or simply enjoying views of East Midtown's stunning architecture from a new perspective.

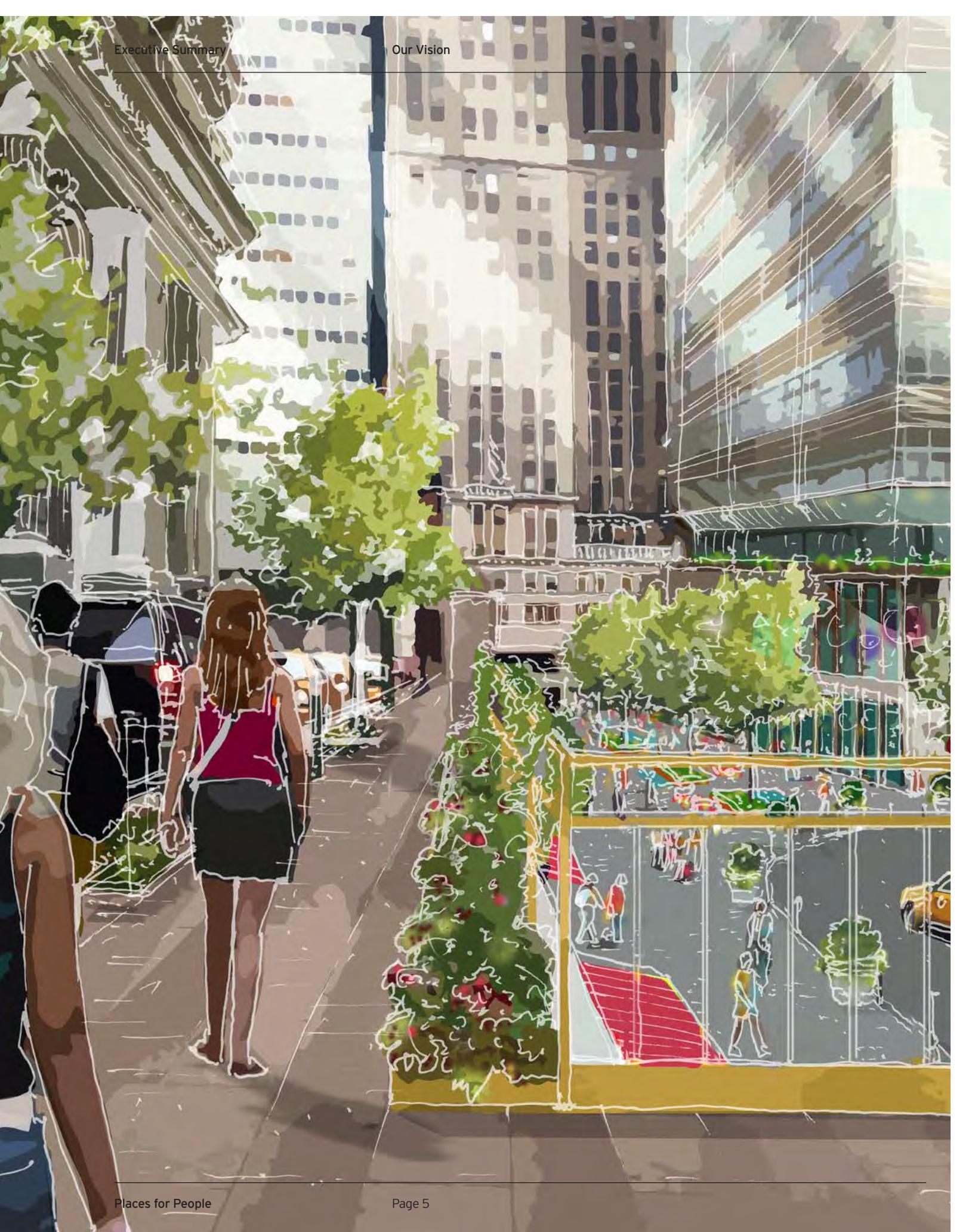
## Circulation & Connections

East Midtown is on the move, whether by public transit, car, bike, or foot. Our vision supports movement for everyone. By alleviating congestion, strengthening key corridors, and improving circulation, we will enhance the connections among the district's transit nodes, businesses, cultural institutions, residences and public spaces, from east-to-west and north-to-south.

## Refreshing the Streetscape

Details matter. The City has successfully deployed targeted interventions like greening, wayfinding, and seating to enhance the vibrancy and character of neighborhoods across the five boroughs. These same tools can be used to improve the public realm experience in East Midtown for workers, residents, and visitors.







**PART 01**

Background

Context

Process

Challenges & Opportunities

**PART 02**

Strategies

A Grand Entrance to New York City

Circulation & Connections

Block by Block

**PART 03**

Next Steps

01





ONE GRAND CENTRAL

CBRE

OnBoard

DGA Security Systems

212.221.2300

StyleWatch

BP55

PAGES



# Context

# The Iconic Business District

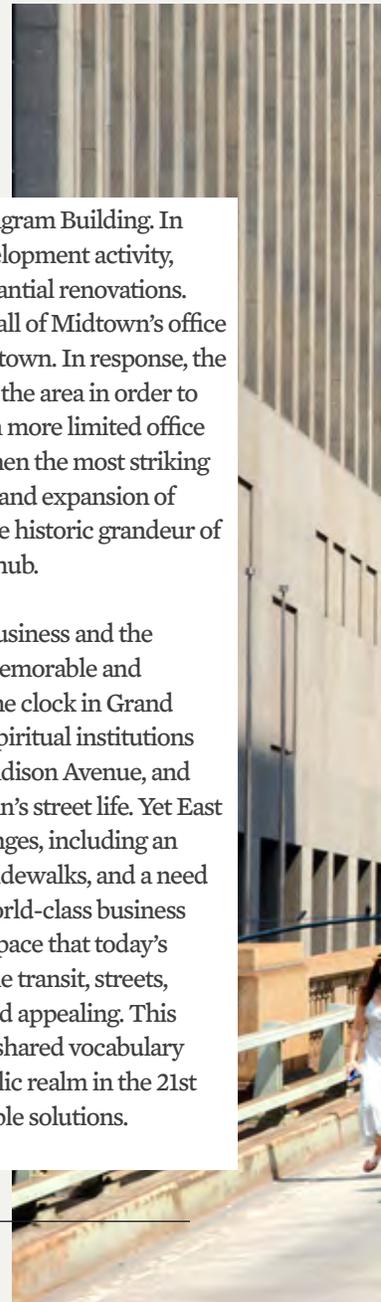
## Past, Present, Future

East Midtown has constantly evolved over the past century, yet Grand Central Terminal remains the heart of this iconic business district. Grand Central Terminal is not only East Midtown's most beloved landmark, it was also the key to the area's development. After a tragic train crash in 1902, New York Central Railroad and its chief engineer William J. Wilgus developed plans for a new terminal with safer, electric trains. The burial and electrification of the railroad tracks underground enabled the construction of a roof on which new hotels, apartments, and office buildings – known as Terminal City – were developed. When Grand Central Terminal was completed in 1913, it catalyzed the development of the Midtown central business district and architectural gems such as the Chanin Building, the Bowery Savings Bank, the Chrysler Building, and the Graybar Building. New commercial space was clustered around 42nd Street and to the south of the Terminal, while distinguished residential buildings were built on Park Avenue to the north.

Following the completion of the viaduct around Grand Central Terminal in 1928, traffic on Park Avenue increased and the walkable, landscaped malls were narrowed to allow an additional lane of traffic in both directions. After World War II, the area's transit access and cachet made East Midtown an excellent location for new office development. Park Avenue was almost completely rebuilt during the postwar "Mad Men"-era building boom. Brick and limestone residential and hotel buildings were largely replaced with modern, International Style corporate

headquarters like Lever House and the Seagram Building. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was further development activity, featuring new construction as well as substantial renovations. After the fiscal crises of the 1970s, virtually all of Midtown's office construction was concentrated in East Midtown. In response, the 1982 Midtown Special District downzoned the area in order to spur development further west, resulting in more limited office development over the last 30 years. Since then the most striking change in the area has been the renovation and expansion of Grand Central Terminal, which restored the historic grandeur of this cherished landmark and major transit hub.

Today, East Midtown is a global center of business and the setting for some of New York City's most memorable and romantic experiences, such as meeting at the clock in Grand Central, strolling on Park Avenue, visiting spiritual institutions like St. Patrick's Cathedral, shopping on Madison Avenue, and admiring the hustle and bustle of Manhattan's street life. Yet East Midtown also faces some long-term challenges, including an aging building stock, crowded streets and sidewalks, and a need for public transit investment. A modern, world-class business district needs to provide the type of office space that today's and future businesses demand, as well as the transit, streets, and public spaces that make a neighborhood appealing. This community-driven vision seeks to create a shared vocabulary around the goals for the East Midtown public realm in the 21st century and promote specific, implementable solutions.



Right, Grand Central Terminal, 1937  
Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives



Below, Grand Central Terminal, 2012



The project study area consists of 73 blocks, generally bounded by East 39th Street, East 57th Street, the east side of Fifth Avenue, Third Avenue, and a portion of Second Avenue.

- World's premier business address with 250,000 jobs and over a dozen Fortune 500 company headquarters
- Nearly 60 acres of streets and sidewalks, representing 30 percent of its total area
- Below-grade pedestrian circulation network that stretches from East 41st Street to East 48th Street
- Almost all of East Midtown's open space is privately-owned public space (POPS)
- Rich public transit network with 7 subway lines, daily Metro-North Railroad service, 17 local and 54 express bus lines, and 14 Citi Bike stations with 704 docks
- Beneficiary of ongoing, multi-billion-dollar public transit investments like the Second Avenue subway and East Side Access
- Features iconic skyscrapers and other landmark buildings, including Grand Central Terminal, the Chrysler Building, Lever House, and the Seagram Building
- Represents approximately 18 percent of Manhattan's office market (70 million square feet) as well as 2 million square feet of residential space





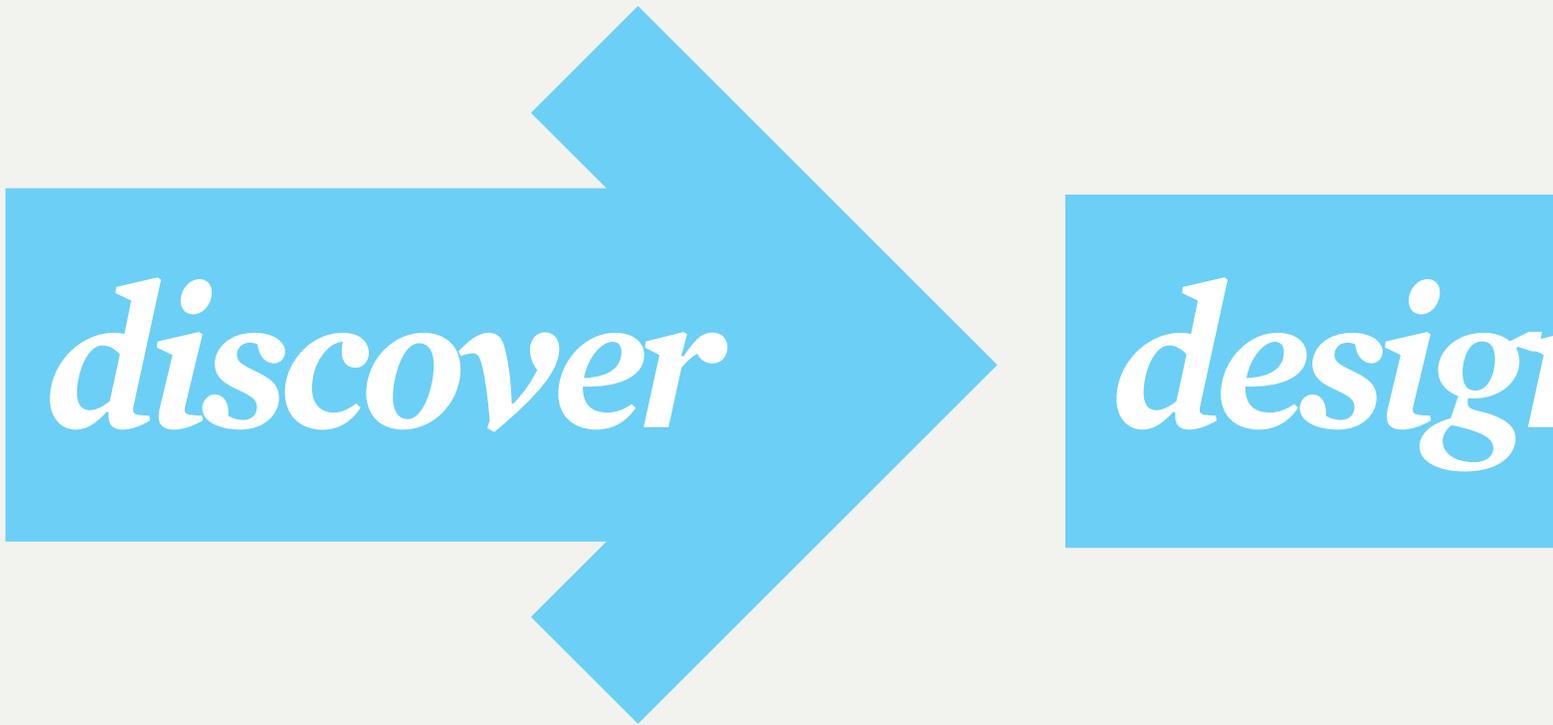




# Process

# Our Community Visioning Process

Form, Function, Interaction



June

July

A



● WORKSHOP 1

● WORKSHO

### Discover

The project team gathered information through stakeholder interviews, web-based interactions, observational and physical site analysis, and a Public Space Public Life Survey. At the first public workshop, participants discussed opportunities to enhance East Midtown and the characteristics of open and public spaces that they value.

### Design

At the second public workshop, the project team presented findings about the existing public space conditions in East Midtown. Participants analyzed maps, data, and public space precedents from New York and other cities to brainstorm solutions for the district.

### Synthesize

The project team drew on participants' insights to develop streetscape projects and design concepts for East Midtown. During the third workshop, participants gave feedback on these conceptual designs, which the project team has synthesized in this final report.

#### Online Engagement

In addition to three public workshops, the planning process facilitated continued civic engagement through a web-based social networking site: [eastmidtownplacesfor-people.com](http://eastmidtownplacesfor-people.com)



# Qualities and Characteristics of East Midtown

We asked workshop participants to think about the design qualities of their favorite public spaces to help us shape the projects and design strategies for East Midtown.



Greenery, Foliage, Trees



Open Space



Fun, Active Playful



Patterns



Wayfinding



More Seating



Gradation Changes



Flexible Space

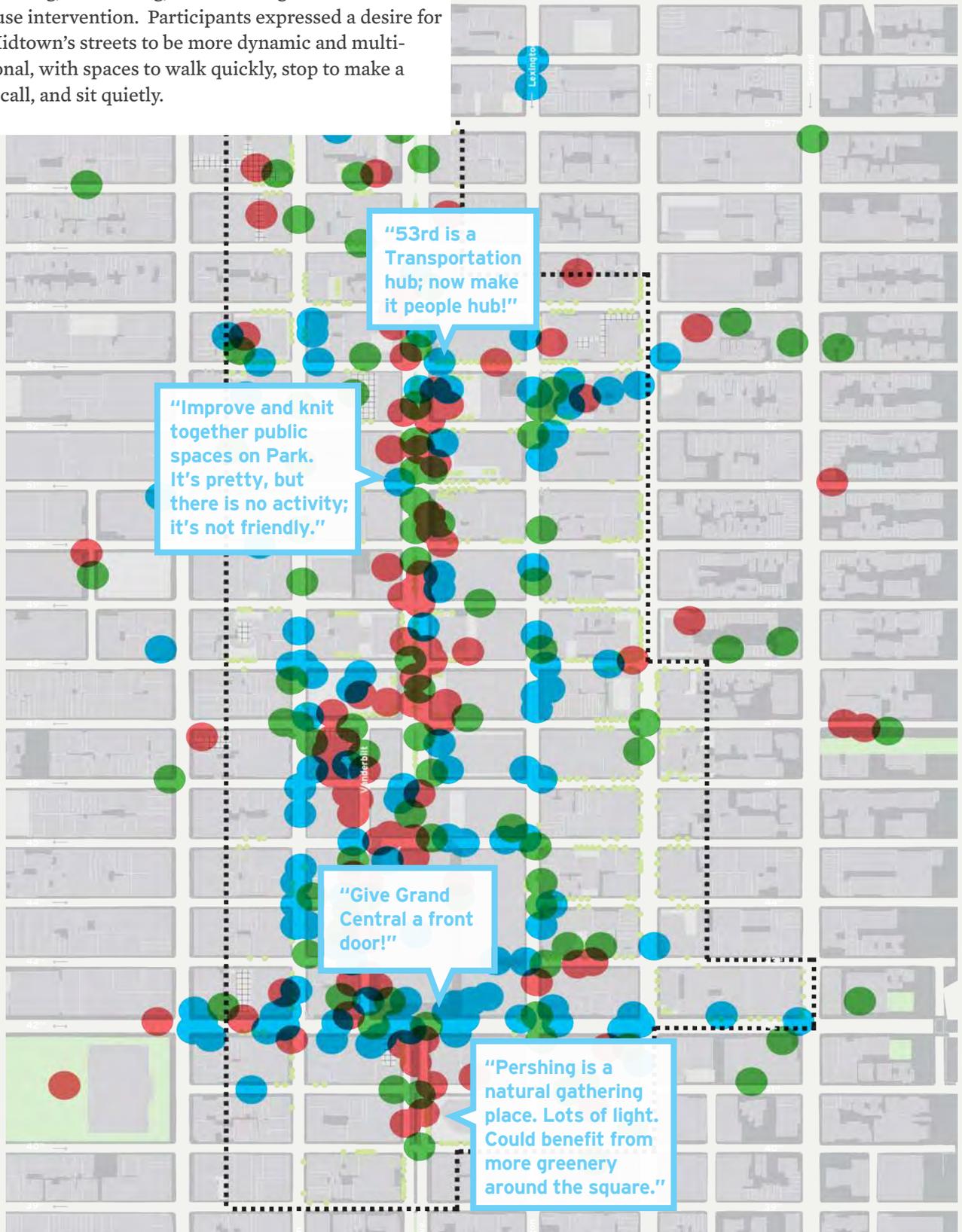


Smoother Circulation

## Areas of Importance

In workshops, interviews, and field studies, participants identified how they use public space in East Midtown – for retreating, commuting, or socializing – and areas that could use intervention. Participants expressed a desire for East Midtown’s streets to be more dynamic and multi-functional, with spaces to walk quickly, stop to make a phone call, and sit quietly.

- Retreat
- Commute
- Socialize



## Public Life Public Space Survey

Inspired by the work of urbanist William H. Whyte, Gehl Architects has developed a unique field survey technique that quantifies how people use places in cities. People oriented-indicators, such as who and how many people walk and bike, and how long people stay and what they do in public spaces, help formulate strategies and designs for improving streets. These data can also serve as a baseline against which future surveys can be compared at the same locations and also through international comparisons and benchmarking with other cities. Based on participant feedback on Areas of Importance at the first public workshop, Gehl surveyed six core zones around Lexington Avenue, Park Avenue, Madison Avenue, Third Avenue, Vanderbilt Avenue, 42nd Street, and 53rd Street on weekdays and weekends to understand how people engage with the public realm.





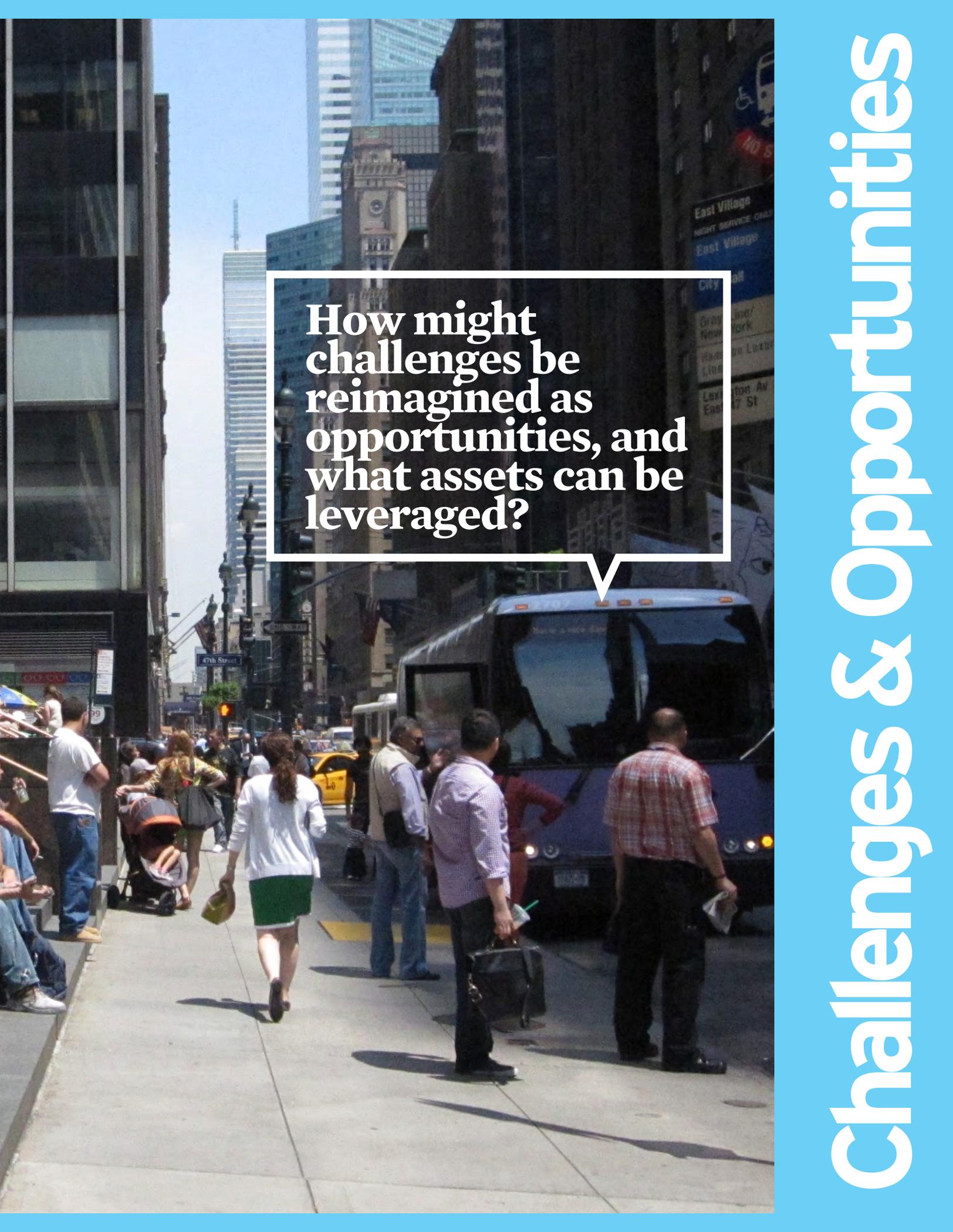
Above, volunteers prepare to survey East Midtown.

Left, a surveyor counts pedestrians on Park Avenue and 47th Street.



THERE'S A SHORTY WALK  
STRAPPING DOMESTIC SYSTEMS  
AT FEET UPWARDS THIS SIDE

consolidated



How might challenges be reimagined as opportunities, and what assets can be leveraged?

# Challenges & Opportunities

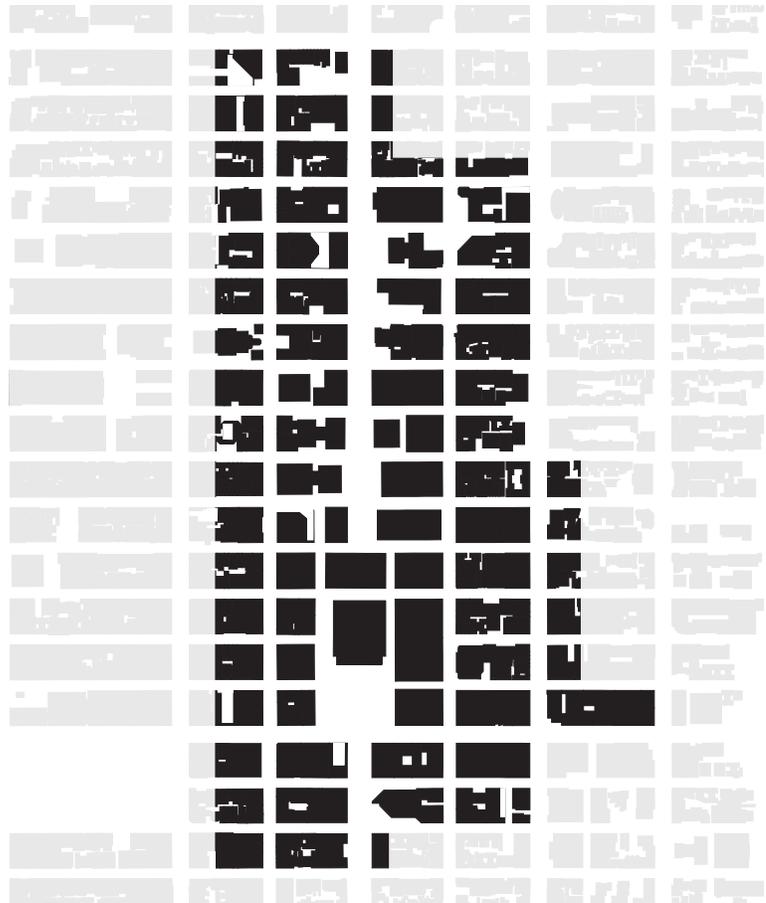
Challenge

# East Midtown needs more open space

Only 4% of East Midtown is open space. However, streets and sidewalks make up 30% of East Midtown, representing 60 acres.



This map shows the area occupied by buildings (in black) and unbuilt space. Not all unbuilt space is usable, but it provides a canvas for design interventions.



Opportunity

# Redesign streets and sidewalks as public open space

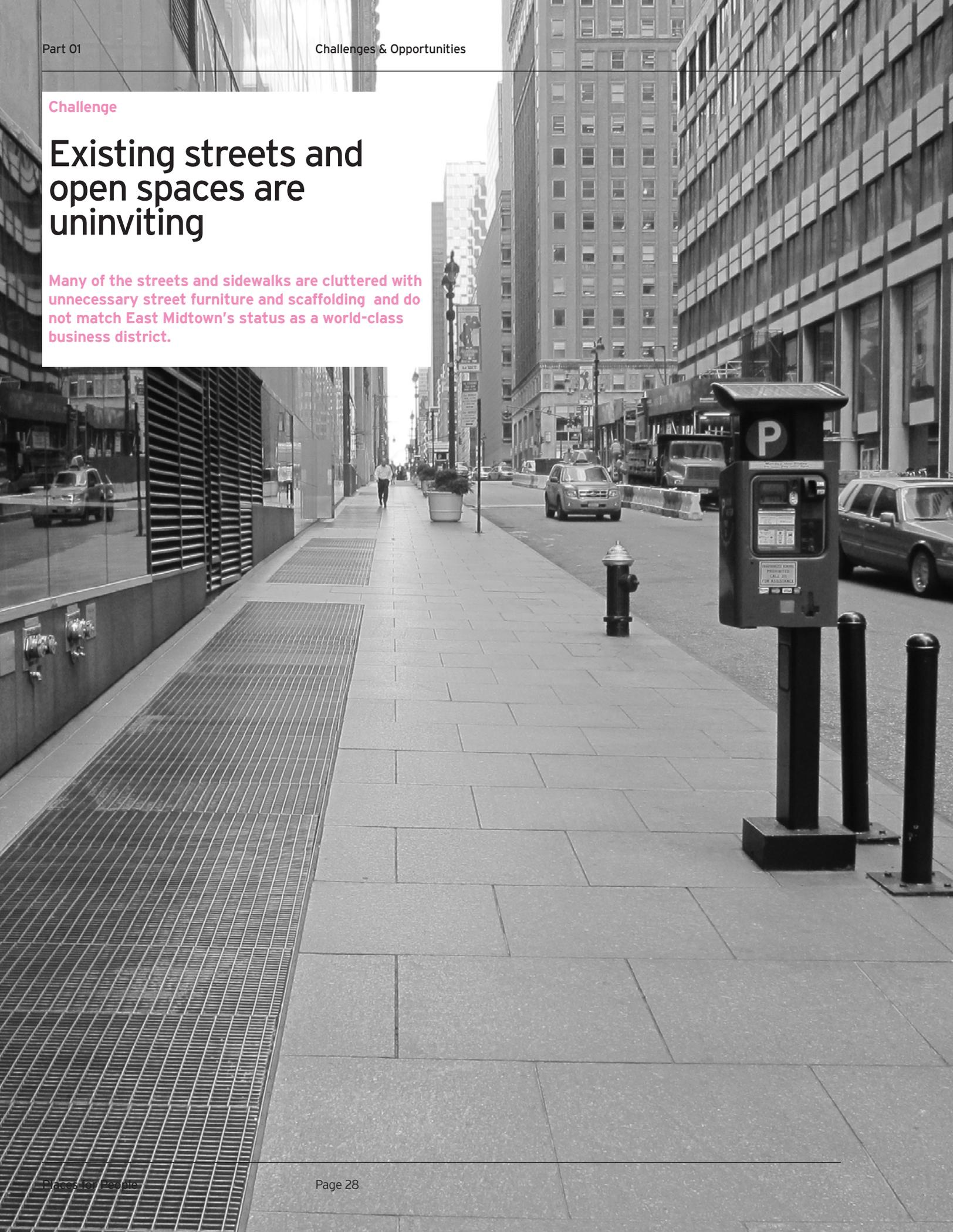
East Midtown's streets and sidewalks are much more than pedestrian and vehicular thoroughfares; they are public spaces that can be used to socialize, work, and rest.



Challenge

# Existing streets and open spaces are uninviting

Many of the streets and sidewalks are cluttered with unnecessary street furniture and scaffolding and do not match East Midtown's status as a world-class business district.



Opportunity

# Enliven streets and sidewalks with small-scale interventions

Amenities like colorful plantings and comfortable seating can make East Midtown's streets and sidewalks more appealing.



Challenge

# Streets and sidewalks are congested during business hours

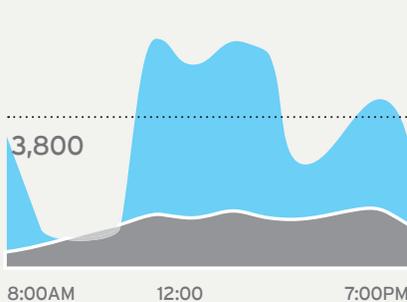
During weekdays, pedestrian activity swells during the morning and evening commutes and at lunchtime.



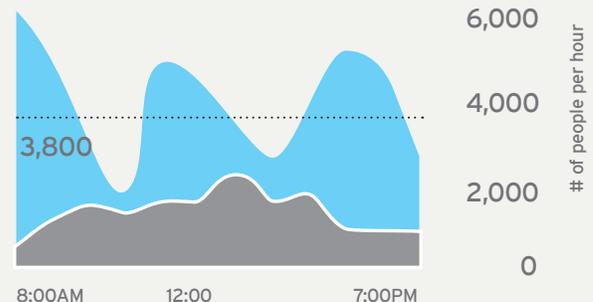
**Pedestrian Congestion**  
Pedestrian crowding exceeds comfortable levels on Lexington Avenue and 42nd Street, as indicated by hourly counts taken between 8am-8pm.

- Weekday
- Weekend
- Overcrowded

42rd Street



Lexington



Opportunity

# Reallocate underutilized space to facilitate pedestrian flow

Expanded sidewalks could relieve sidewalk crowding and provide space for elements like seating and plantings.



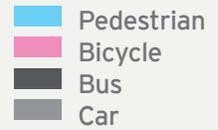
Challenge

# Street space does not match street uses

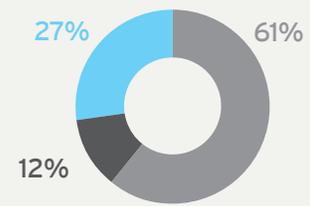
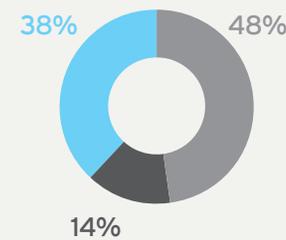
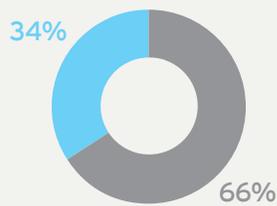
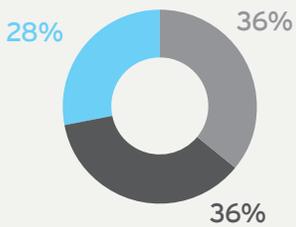
Cars account for less than a third of total traffic on East Midtown's streets, but they take up over half of the street's usable space.



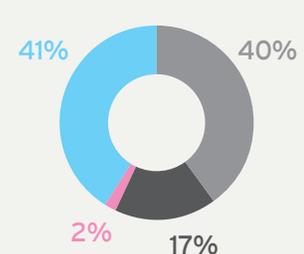
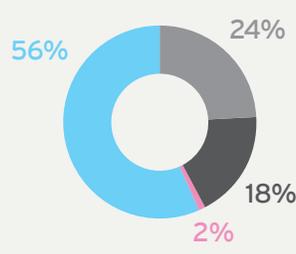
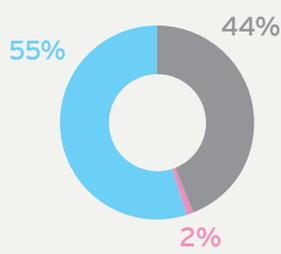
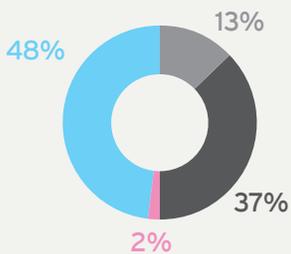
On key corridors in East Midtown, the streets and sidewalks could better serve the type and volume of users.



Amount of Space



Volume of Use



Madison Avenue

Park Avenue

Lexington Avenue

Third Avenue

Opportunity

# Rebalance streets to reflect the actual mix of users: cars and trucks, buses, pedestrians, and cyclists



**Challenge**

# East Midtown's most treasured assets are difficult to enjoy from the street level

Crowded sidewalks and a lack of public seating reduce opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors to admire and experience places like Grand Central Terminal and the Park Avenue medians.



Opportunity

Design public spaces that leverage iconic views and historic buildings



02





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# Grand Entrance to NYC



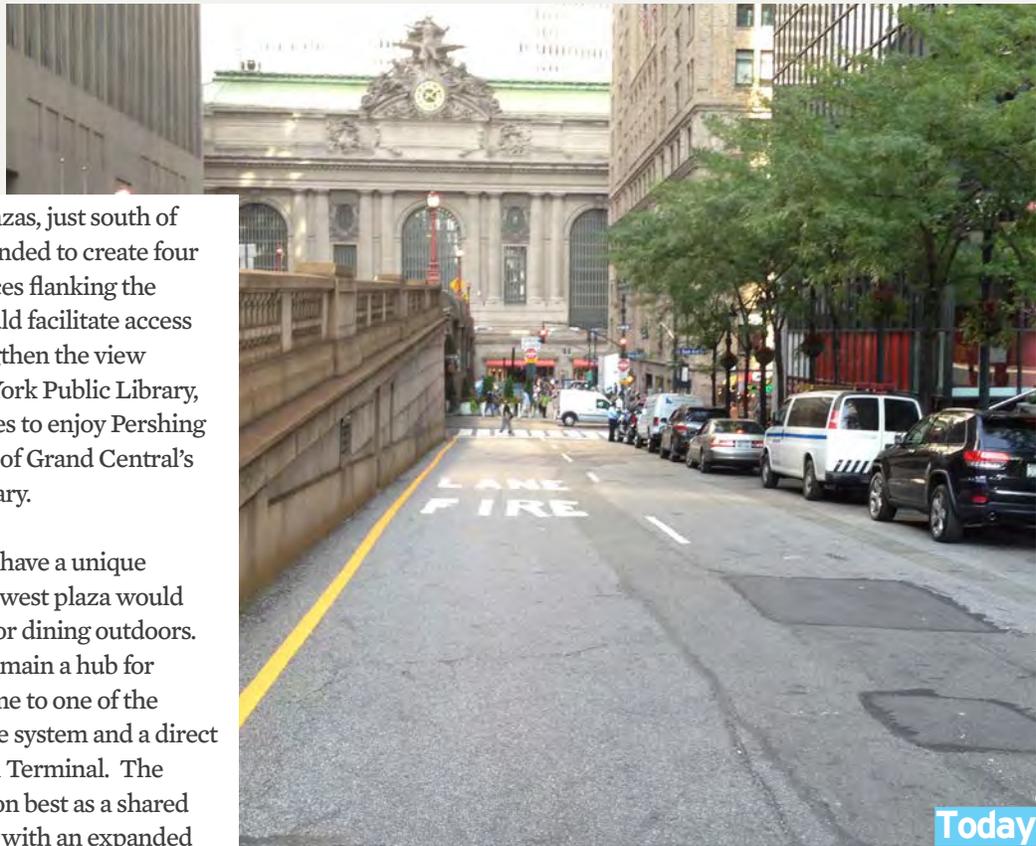


# Pershing Square South

## A new setting for the jewel of Midtown, Grand Central

Pershing Square's existing plazas, just south of Grand Central, could be expanded to create four high-quality public open spaces flanking the Viaduct. This expansion would facilitate access to the bicycle network, strengthen the view corridor leading to the New York Public Library, and provide new opportunities to enjoy Pershing Square's incomparable views of Grand Central's iconic south façade and statuary.

Each of the four plazas could have a unique focus and identity. The northwest plaza would continue to be a destination for dining outdoors. The northeast plaza would remain a hub for transportation activity, as home to one of the largest Citi Bike stations in the system and a direct access point to Grand Central Terminal. The southwest plaza could function best as a shared vehicle and pedestrian space, with an expanded sidewalk for seating and plantings, and a lane for vehicles as well. The southeast plaza, nestled between the Viaduct on one side and an expansive POPS on the other, could be designed to invited appreciation of the Viaduct's exquisite granite façade. This could be an ideal outdoor meeting space, for work or pleasure.

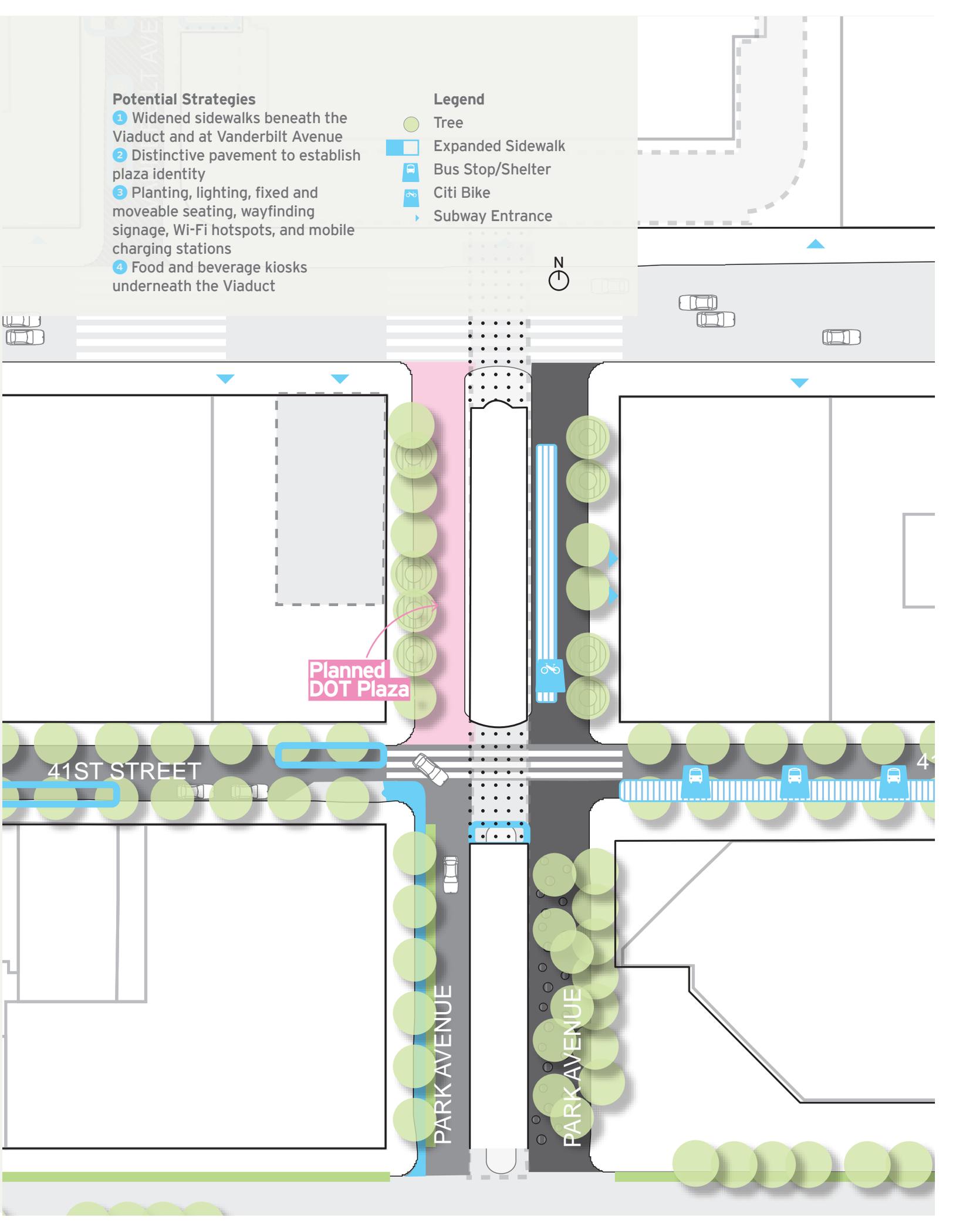


### Potential Strategies

- 1 Widened sidewalks beneath the Viaduct and at Vanderbilt Avenue
- 2 Distinctive pavement to establish plaza identity
- 3 Planting, lighting, fixed and moveable seating, wayfinding signage, Wi-Fi hotspots, and mobile charging stations
- 4 Food and beverage kiosks underneath the Viaduct

### Legend

- Tree
- Expanded Sidewalk
- 🚏 Bus Stop/Shelter
- 🚲 Citi Bike
- ▶ Subway Entrance







GRAND CENTRAL  
TERMINAL

# Vanderbilt Plaza

## A great outdoor public space for Grand Central

Vanderbilt Avenue is the gateway to Grand Central for thousands of people each day, but today it serves largely as a service road for deliveries and drop-offs. Vanderbilt could become an extension of the Terminal – offering a flexible space for passive recreation, social gathering, or working. Street traffic could be prohibited between 42nd to 43rd Streets, while maintaining access for deliveries, pick-up/drop-off, and emergency vehicles between 43rd and 45th Streets. Distinctive paving, seating, plantings, lighting, café spaces, and public art could make the plaza an attractive place to walk through or to linger in, day or night.



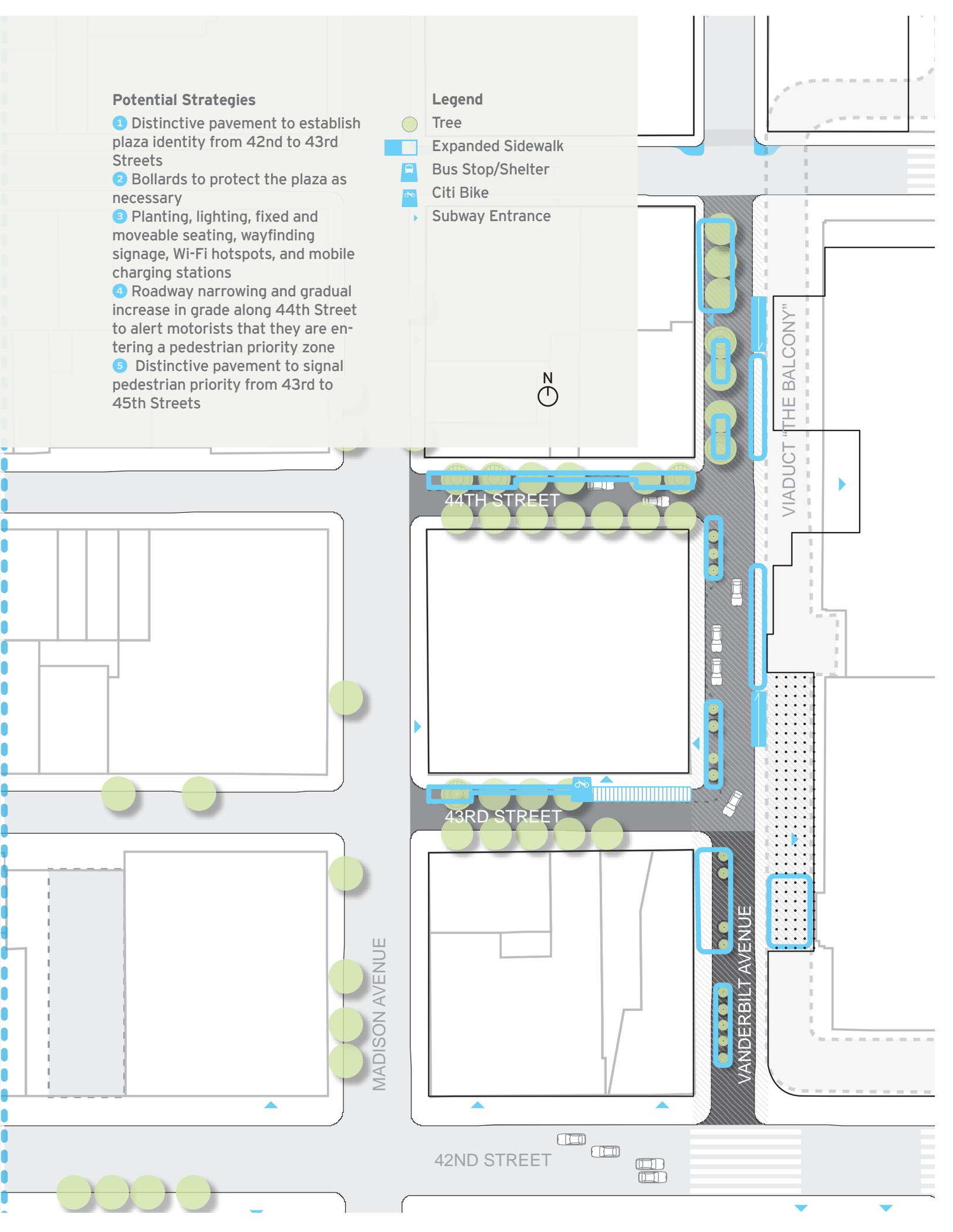
Today

### Potential Strategies

- 1 Distinctive pavement to establish plaza identity from 42nd to 43rd Streets
- 2 Bollards to protect the plaza as necessary
- 3 Planting, lighting, fixed and moveable seating, wayfinding signage, Wi-Fi hotspots, and mobile charging stations
- 4 Roadway narrowing and gradual increase in grade along 44th Street to alert motorists that they are entering a pedestrian priority zone
- 5 Distinctive pavement to signal pedestrian priority from 43rd to 45th Streets

### Legend

- Tree
- ▭ Expanded Sidewalk
- Ⓜ Bus Stop/Shelter
- Ⓢ Citi Bike
- ▶ Subway Entrance



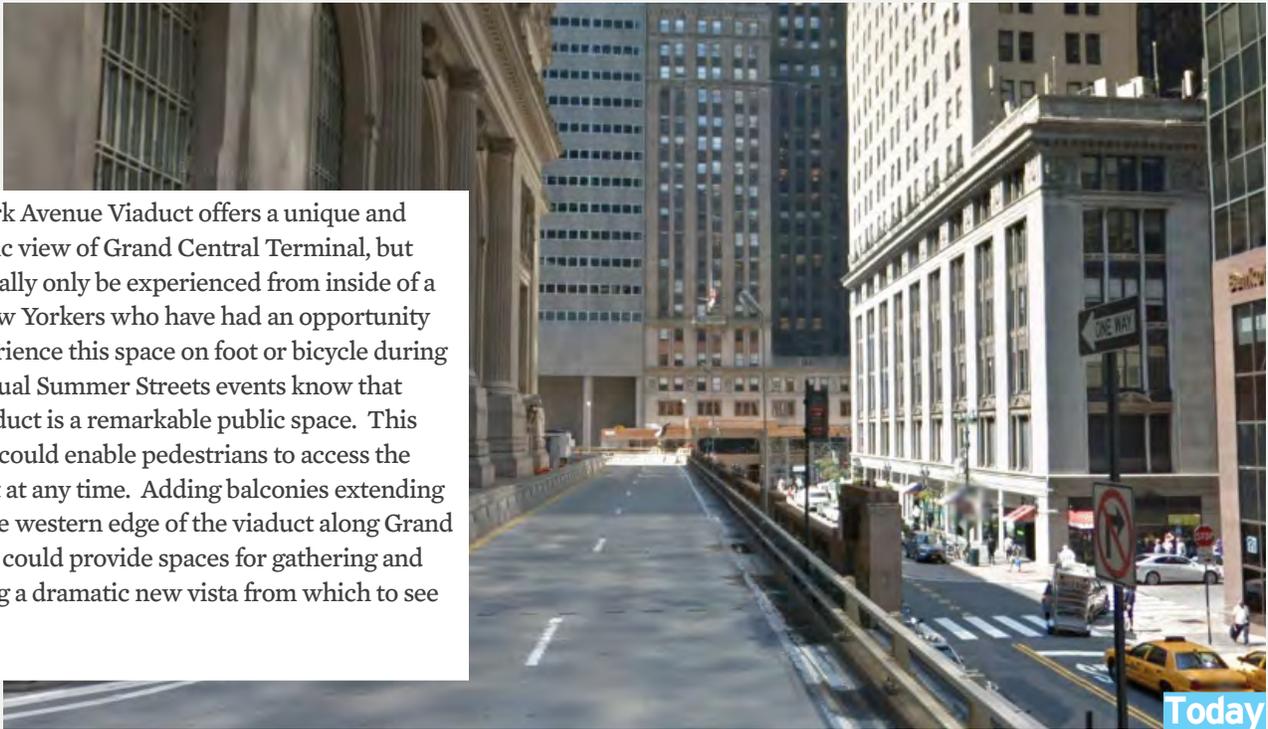




# The Balcony

## Bringing public space to an entirely new level

The Park Avenue Viaduct offers a unique and dramatic view of Grand Central Terminal, but can usually only be experienced from inside of a car. New Yorkers who have had an opportunity to experience this space on foot or bicycle during the annual Summer Streets events know that the Viaduct is a remarkable public space. This project could enable pedestrians to access the Viaduct at any time. Adding balconies extending from the western edge of the viaduct along Grand Central could provide spaces for gathering and enjoying a dramatic new vista from which to see the city.



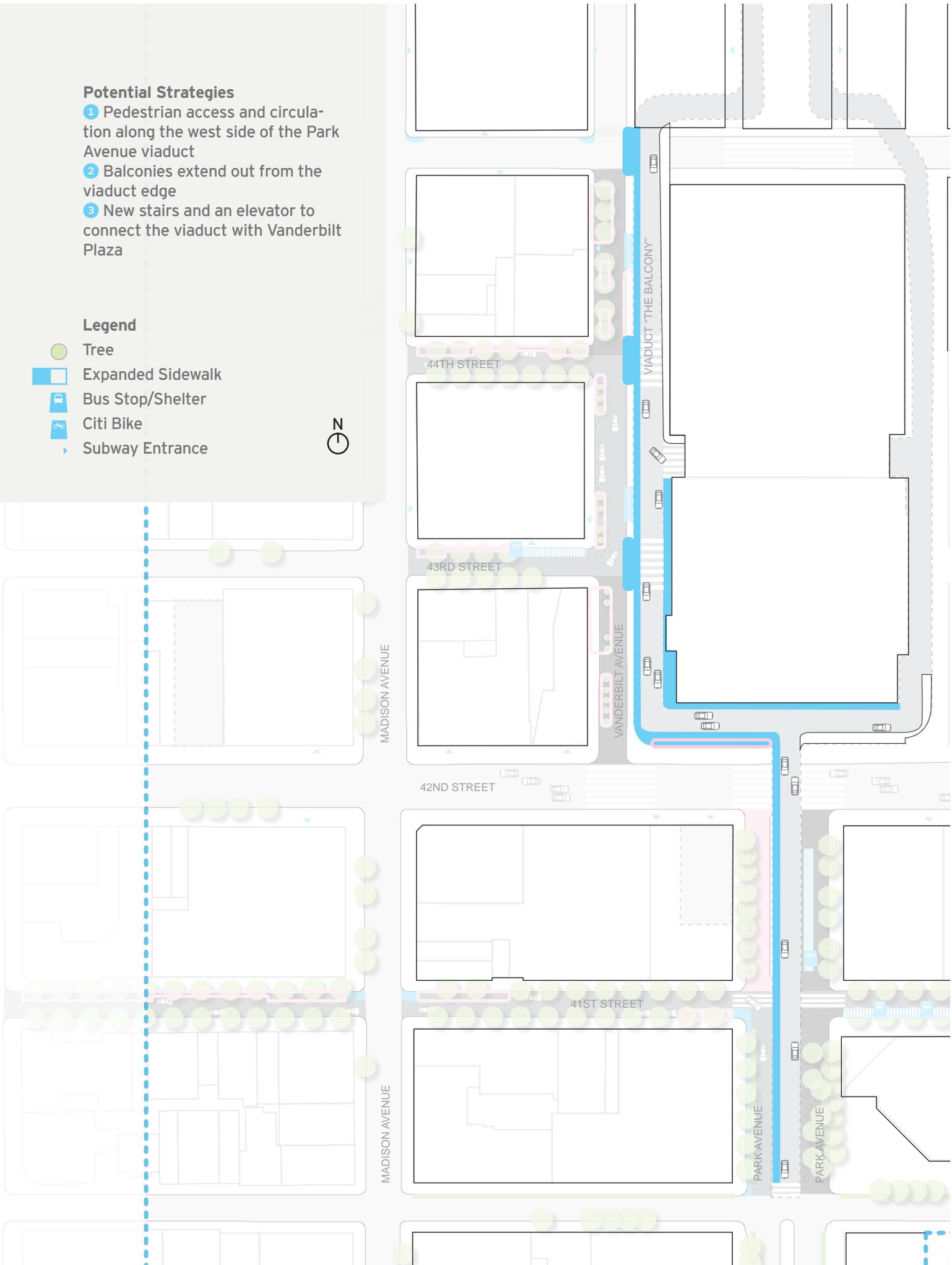
New Yorkers enjoying the Viaduct during the annual Summer Streets event

### Potential Strategies

- 1 Pedestrian access and circulation along the west side of the Park Avenue viaduct
- 2 Balconies extend out from the viaduct edge
- 3 New stairs and an elevator to connect the viaduct with Vanderbilt Plaza

### Legend

- Tree
- Expanded Sidewalk
- Bus Stop/Shelter
- Citi Bike
- Subway Entrance



# Library Way

## A new place to read a book under the gaze of the lions

Library Way connects the two blocks between Pershing Square and the New York Public Library. Identifying signage and banners grace the light poles, but more can be done to strengthen this connection and celebrate its views. By carving out a handful of small seating areas along the north and south sides of East 41st street, pedestrians could enjoy vistas to the Library and Pershing Square, while protected from busy sidewalk traffic. The public realm could also be improved by better managing the airport buses that regularly load and unload passengers along Library Way and the adjacent blocks. We propose to consolidate their operations on an appropriate block within the Grand Central district and to provide amenities for waiting passengers such as shelter, seating, greening and Wi-Fi hotspots.



MADISON AVENUE

**Potential Strategies**

- 1 Extended sidewalks with benches and greenery

**Legend**

- Tree
- Expanded Sidewalk
- Bus Stop/Shelter
- Citi Bike
- Subway Entrance

VANDERBILT A

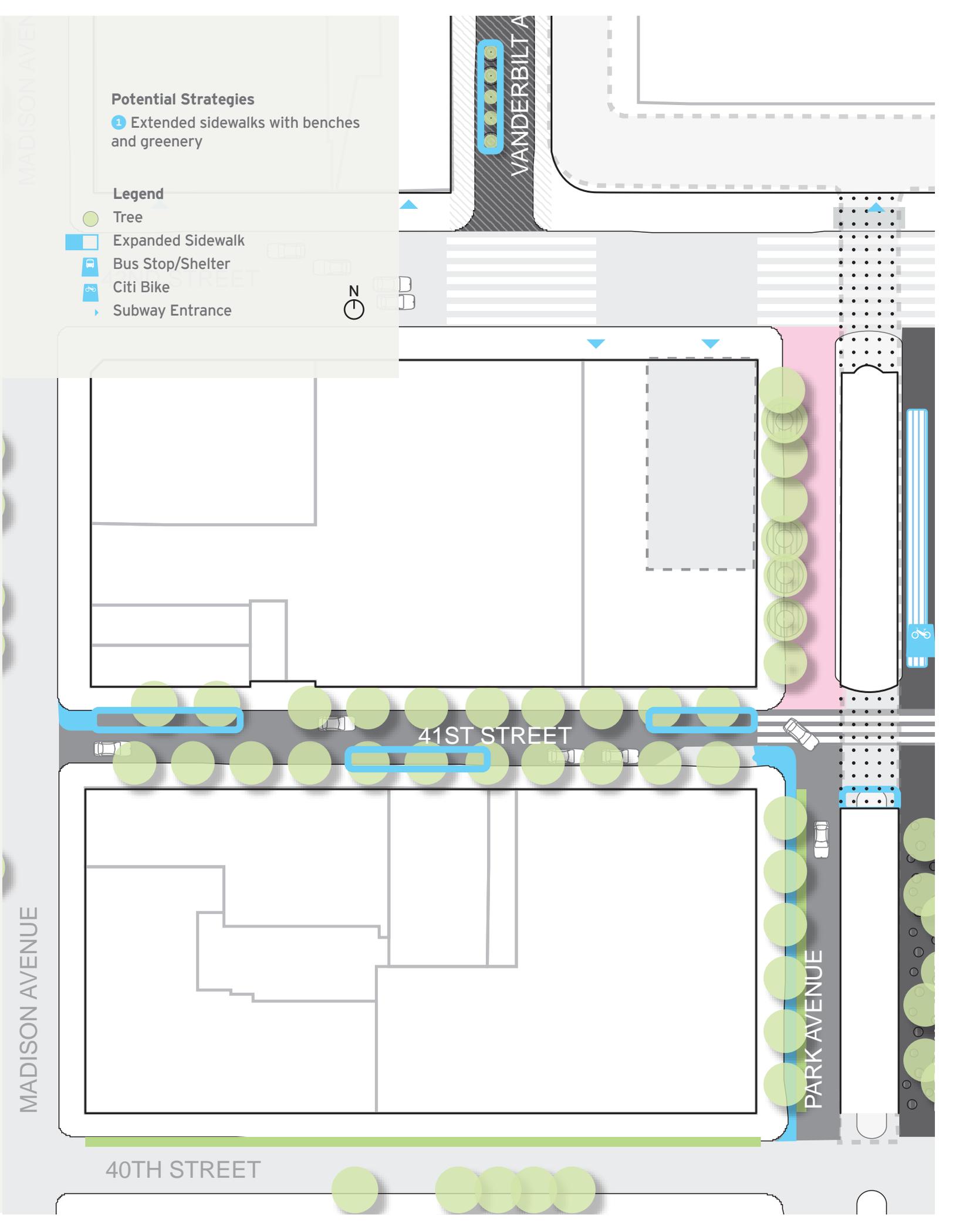


MADISON AVENUE

41ST STREET

PARK AVENUE

40TH STREET







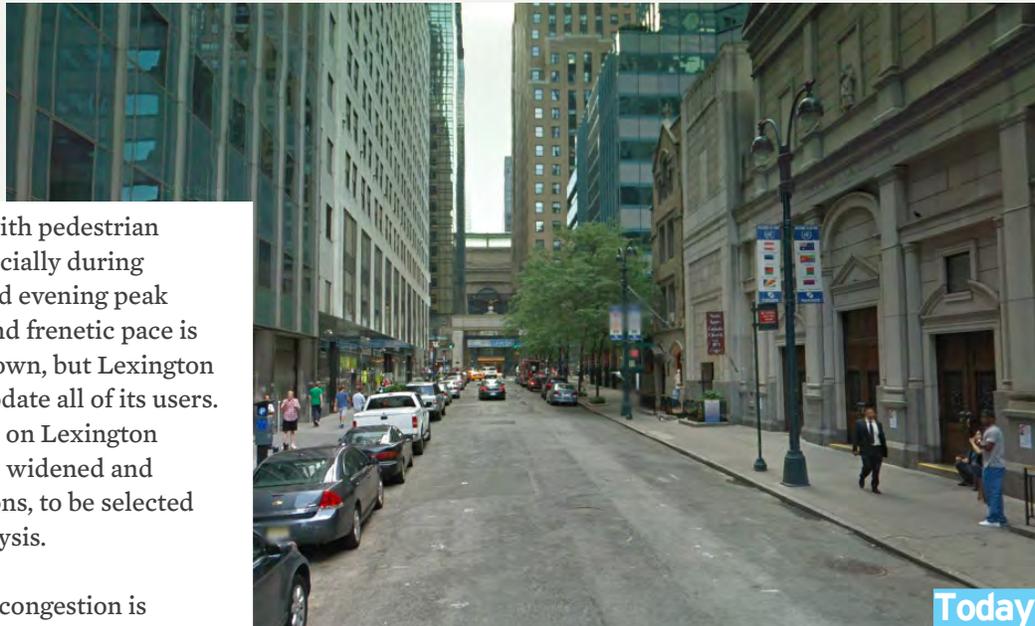
# Grand Central East

## An ordinary street becomes an extraordinary market

Lexington Avenue swells with pedestrian activity each weekday, especially during the morning, lunchtime, and evening peak periods. This excitement and frenetic pace is characteristic of East Midtown, but Lexington Avenue strains to accommodate all of its users. By reallocating street space on Lexington Avenue, sidewalks could be widened and expanded at key intersections, to be selected through further traffic analysis.

Another strategy to relieve congestion is to make alternate pedestrian routes more attractive. Travelers can exit the Terminal through the Grand Central Market or Graybar passageway and travel east via 43rd or 44th Street, but they rarely linger to take advantage of the views of the United Nations Secretariat and General Assembly buildings. What if we could extend the excitement of the Grand Central Market onto 43rd Street and make “United Nations Way” home to a local farmer’s market, or an international foods bazaar?

Lexington Avenue during the evening rush.



## Potential Strategies

### 43rd Street/United Nations Way

- 1 Improved crosswalk
- 2 Expanded sidewalks to accommodate an outdoor marketplace
- 3 Wayfinding signage to highlight existing POPS
- 4 Widened sidewalk to provide additional seating and planters

### Lexington Avenue

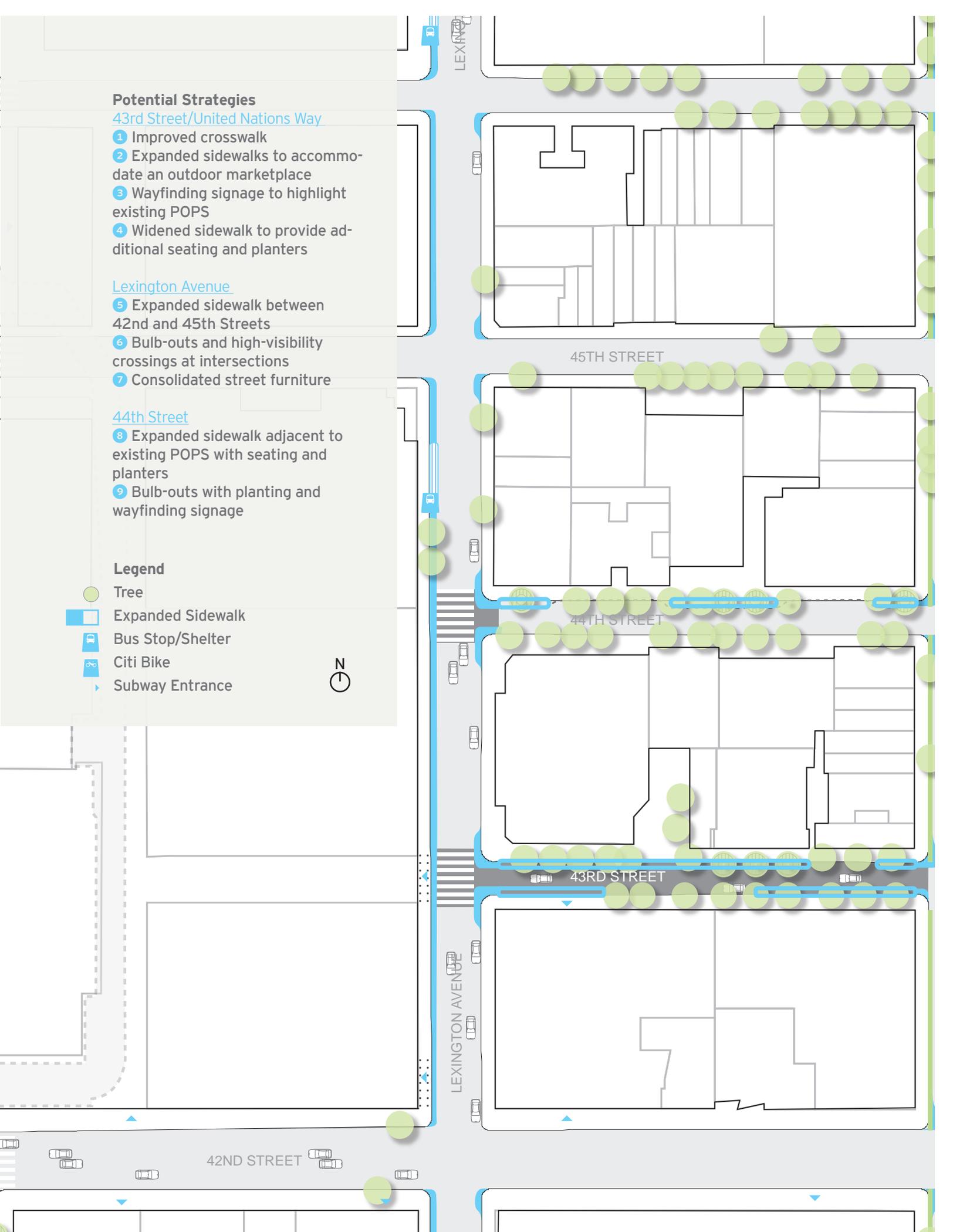
- 5 Expanded sidewalk between 42nd and 45th Streets
- 6 Bulb-outs and high-visibility crossings at intersections
- 7 Consolidated street furniture

### 44th Street

- 8 Expanded sidewalk adjacent to existing POPS with seating and planters
- 9 Bulb-outs with planting and wayfinding signage

## Legend

- Tree
- Expanded Sidewalk
- 🚏 Bus Stop/Shelter
- 🚲 Citi Bike
- ▶ Subway Entrance



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# Circulation & Connections



N  
world  
53rd  
Dow  
& Br  
E

prada  
prada

02

rd class  
d street

ntown  
ooklyn



8 Avenue  
Flatiron District

Station  
Entrance

Map  
Information

Hours  
of Operation

Accessibility

Lost and Found

Security

Station  
Closures

Station  
Hours

Station  
Map



# A World-Class East 53rd Street

## A street for the arts and for people

East 53rd Street is lined with cultural treasures. Exit the subway at Lexington Avenue and you will walk west past the Seagram Building and Lever House, and onwards to Paley Park. As you continue, you will cross Park Avenue with its public art and colorful landscaping, and proceed to the Museum of Modern Art. Six of the area's existing plazas can be found on this corridor, often directly across the street from one another.

East 53rd Street could become a preferred crosstown route for pedestrians, linking its extraordinary assets with innovative street design that puts people first. Widened pedestrian zones, with particular focus on nodes outside subways and existing plazas, will enhance the experience of walking across town from Fifth Avenue to Third Avenue and add prominence to these cultural and architectural jewels.



Vester Voldgade, Copenhagen

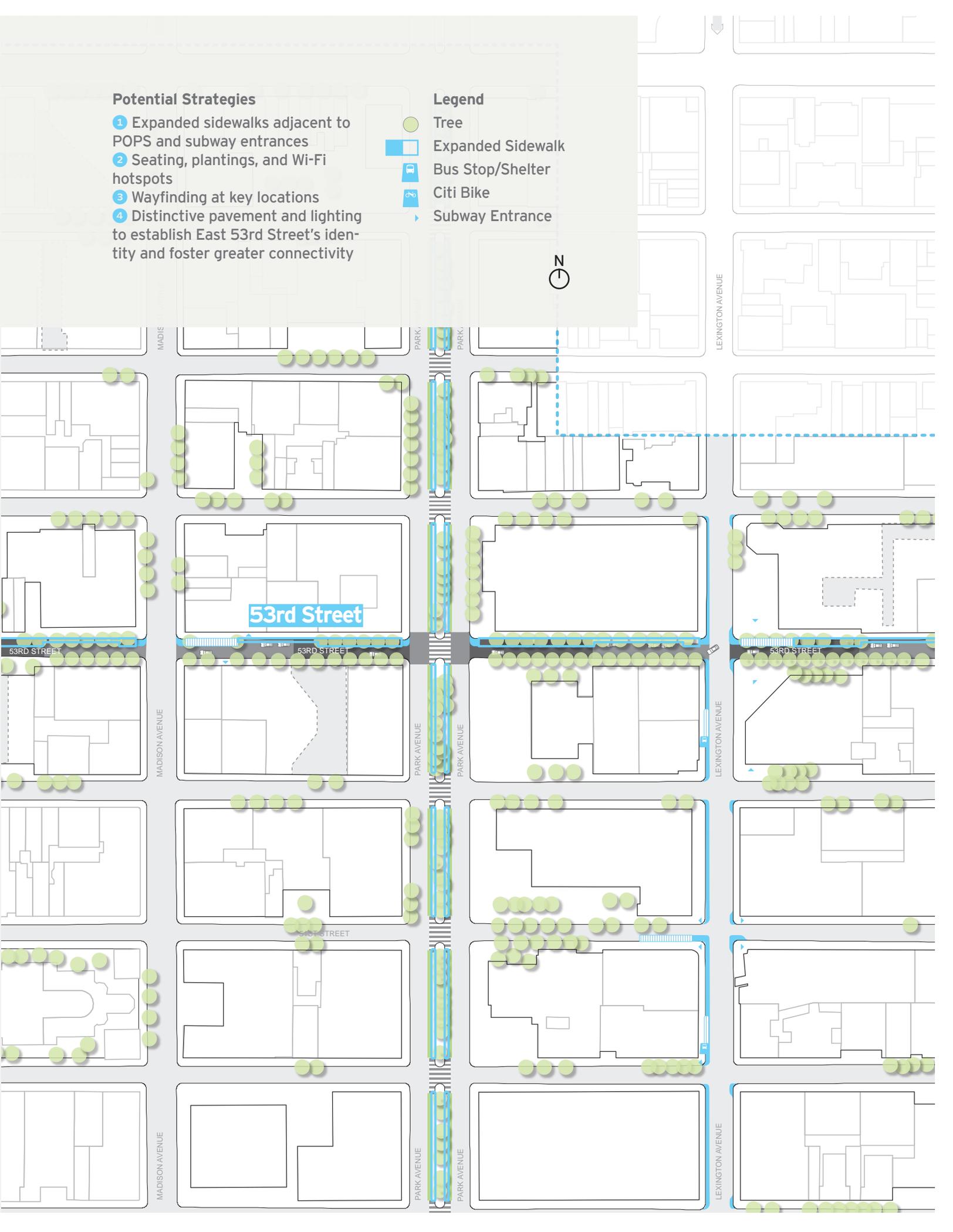


### Potential Strategies

- 1 Expanded sidewalks adjacent to POPS and subway entrances
- 2 Seating, plantings, and Wi-Fi hotspots
- 3 Wayfinding at key locations
- 4 Distinctive pavement and lighting to establish East 53rd Street's identity and foster greater connectivity

### Legend

-  Tree
-  Expanded Sidewalk
-  Bus Stop/Shelter
-  Citi Bike
-  Subway Entrance







DON'T BE THE B... THE B... FINE + 2 P...

PASSENGER CARS ONLY

The Museum of Modern Art ↑

MetLife

# A Park in Park Avenue

## Renewing the green tradition

Today



Today

Park Avenue epitomizes the elegance and stature of Midtown and its medians are one of the district's strongest visual assets. In our community visioning process, we heard a variety of ideas for improving access to and enjoyment of the Park Avenue malls. We have analyzed three different representative possibilities, each entailing a different degree of change to the current form and function of the street.

One option is to provide seating, decorative plantings, and public art at the intersections, similar to the Broadway malls on the Upper West Side. This would provide new opportunities for pedestrian refuge while crossing the street, a significant safety benefit for children and seniors. Under a second proposal, the medians could be widened by either 11 or 22 feet, based on where vehicles make left turns.

A third design would eliminate left turns, allowing for a uniform increase of 22 feet and enabling pedestrians to travel directly between medians. An expansion of this magnitude could create new options for pedestrian and bicycle access, as well as for passive or active recreational uses. This transformation would also make Park Avenue, once again, into a true green oasis for East Midtown.

Historic Park Avenue Malls



### Potential Strategies

- 1 Expanded Park Avenue medians
- 2 Paths for north-south pedestrian and/or bicycle travel along the medians, either along the edges or through the interior of the space
- 3 North-south pedestrian crossings from median to median
- 4 Plantings and public art along the medians
- 5 Seating along pathways and at intersections

### Legend

- Tree
- ▭ Expanded Sidewalk
- Ⓜ Bus Stop/Shelter
- Ⓜ Citi Bike
- ▶ Subway Entrance

MADISON AVENUE

53RD STREET



PARK AVENUE

PARK AVENUE

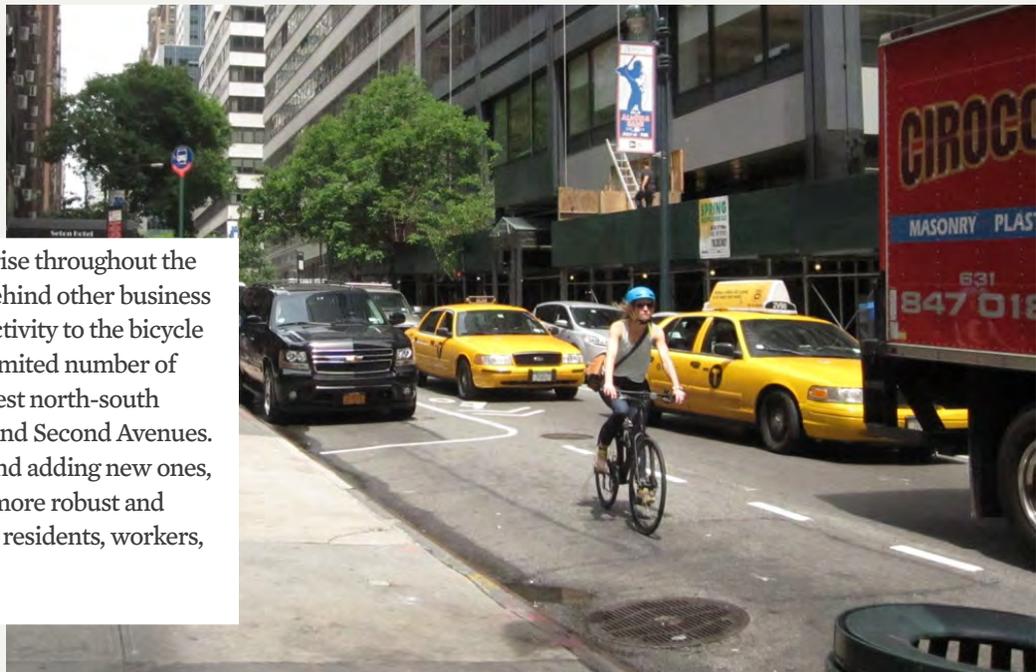
Park Avenue

51ST STREET



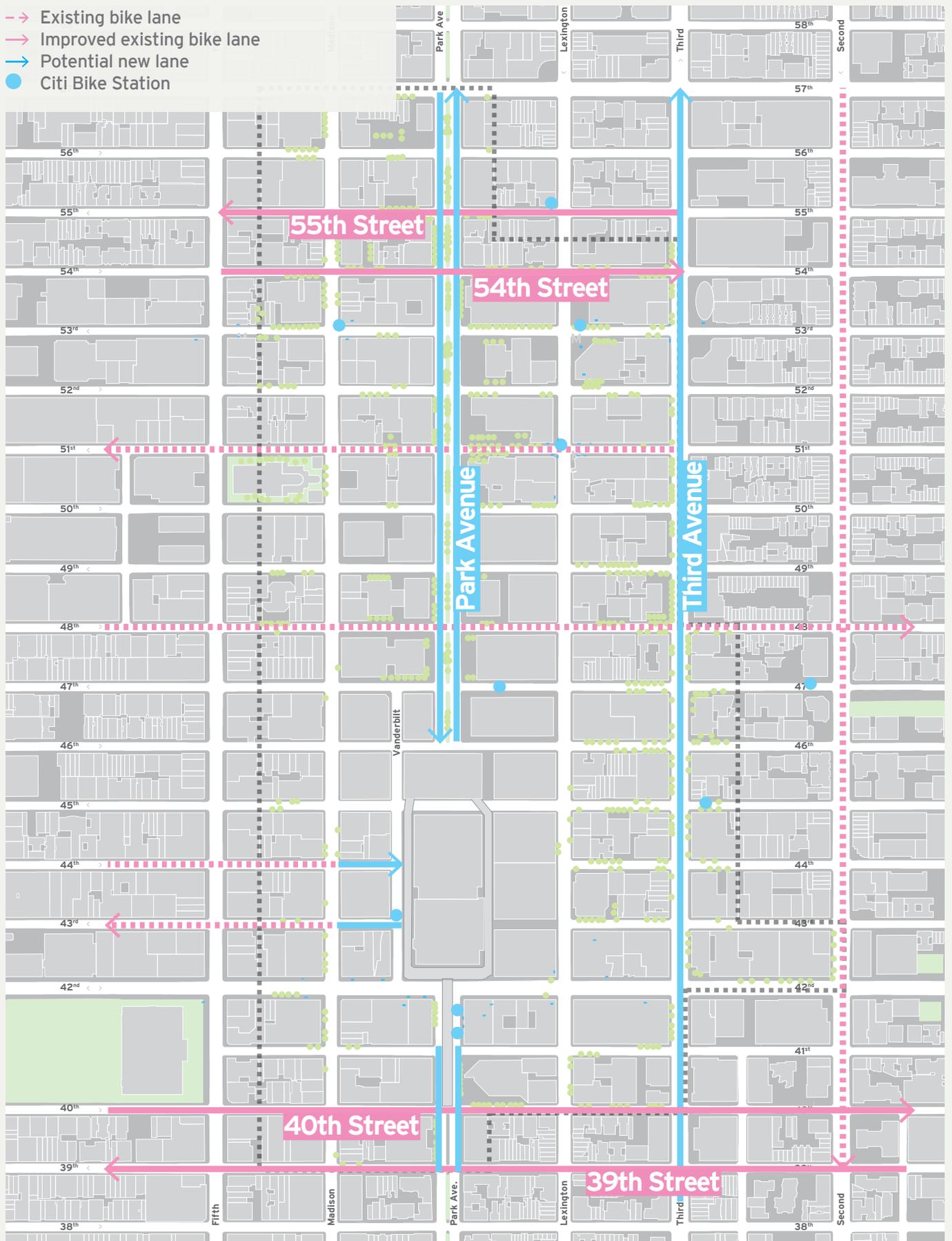
# An Expanded Bicycle Network

Bicycle commuting is on the rise throughout the city, but East Midtown lags behind other business districts in terms of its connectivity to the bicycle network. Today, there are a limited number of east-west routes, and the closest north-south connection is found on First and Second Avenues. By upgrading existing lanes and adding new ones, East Midtown can provide a more robust and functional network for use by residents, workers, and visitors on two wheels.



8th Avenue and Essex Street provide excellent examples of protected bike paths

- > Existing bike lane
- > Improved existing bike lane
- > Potential new lane
- Citi Bike Station



# Third Avenue

## Finding the right mix

Third Avenue is a vital corridor for East Midtown, and home to a healthy mix of offices, retail space, and residences. However, there is a mismatch between the amount of space allocated to cars and the volume of pedestrians and cyclists. Taking one lane away from automobiles and creating a bicycle lane, dedicated bus lane, or expanded sidewalks could restore this balance. A new bicycle lane could dramatically improve overall mobility and accessibility for cyclists. On the other hand, expanding sidewalks could create opportunities for benches, trees and flowers, or more creative elements like water features, chess tables, and interactive public art.



Today



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Details matter. The City has successfully deployed targeted interventions like greening, wayfinding, and seating to enhance the vibrancy and character of neighborhoods across the five boroughs. These same tools can be used to improve the public realm experience in East Midtown for workers, residents, and visitors.

**Block by Block**

# Greening East Midtown

Adding greenery to the streets and sidewalks of East Midtown would have many benefits: landscaping improves the aesthetics of the streetscape; green cover reduces the urban heat island effect and decreases energy costs related to air temperatures; and vegetation mitigates air pollution and captures carbon dioxide, improving environmental and public health. Curb extensions with plantings and street trees complement proposals to add greenery to new public open spaces.

## **Curb Extensions with Plantings**

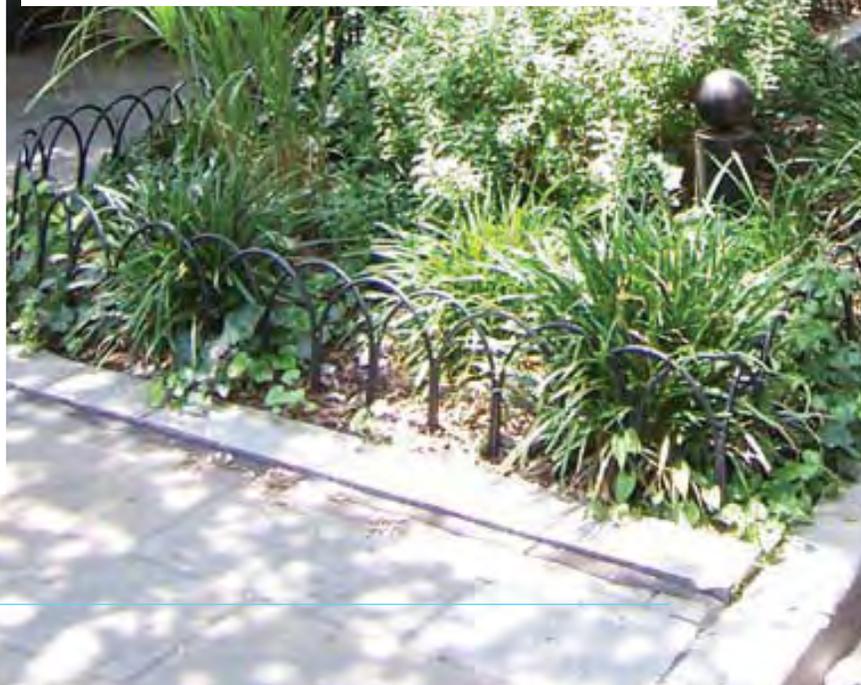
In connection with design and engineering studies that would be required to implement changes to East Midtown's street geometry, opportunities to add planted areas to curb extensions should be identified.

## **Street Seats with Parklets**

NYC DOT's Curbside Seating Platform program provides seasonal, outdoor public seating in the parking lane of the street where sidewalk seating is not available. The attractive landscaping surrounding the seating areas beautifies the streetscape. Any business or institution that owns or operates frontage at the ground floor of a building may be eligible to install a Street Seat. Outreach to property owners and local business improvement districts could identify new locations for street seats.

## **Trees and Planters**

In identifying exact locations for trees and planters, consultation with local property owners and community members, as well as a review of subsurface conditions like utilities, is required. Planter locations should be compatible with the goal of maintaining pedestrian flow in high-traffic areas. Tree pits should be designed with pervious pavers to allow for walking over pits while reducing soil compaction. Tree species should be selected to promote a diversity of species that can flourish in the varied sun/shade patterns of East Midtown.



Street seats on Pearl Street



Left: Mulry Square, Manhattan

Right: Grand Central Partnership planter

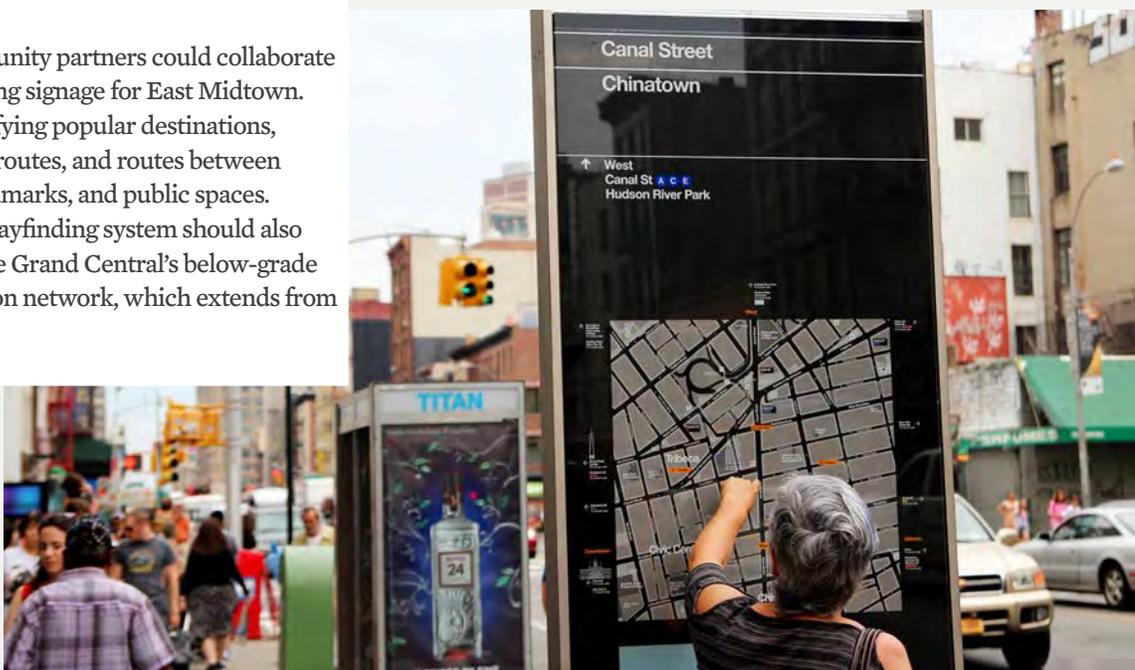


# Wayfinding



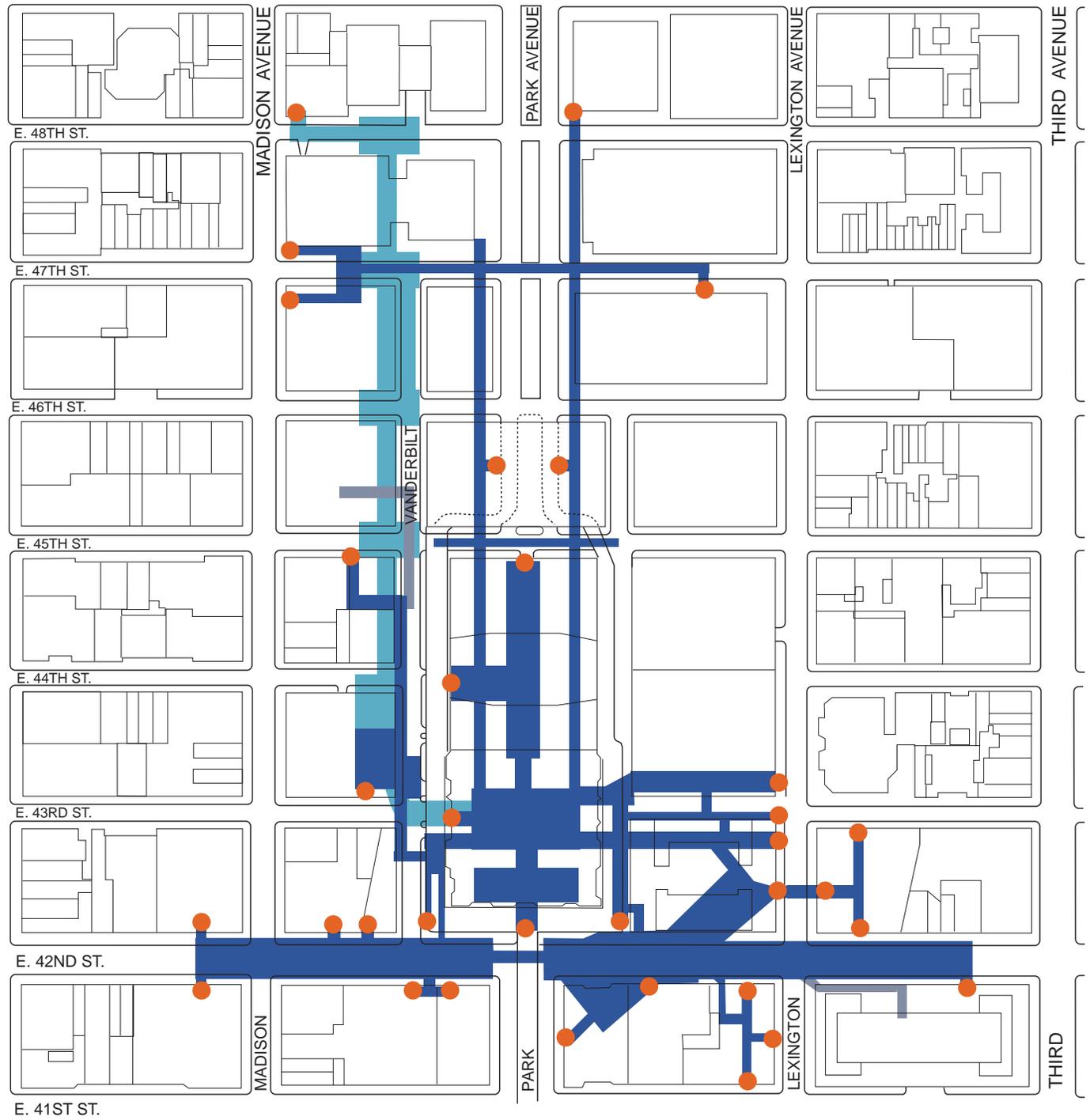
New York City is a walking city, but pedestrian-oriented information is sometimes difficult to find. A 2010 NYC DOT study found that 33% of locals could not indicate which direction north was, and nearly 10% admitted being lost in the past week. WalkNYC, NYC DOT's new wayfinding system that premiered in four neighborhoods during the summer of 2013, provides a user-friendly mapping system for New Yorkers and tourists.

The City and community partners could collaborate to develop wayfinding signage for East Midtown. This requires identifying popular destinations, primary pedestrian routes, and routes between transit services, landmarks, and public spaces. An East Midtown wayfinding system should also include and promote Grand Central's below-grade pedestrian circulation network, which extends from 41st to 48th Streets.



### Grand Central Area Network of Pedestrian Circulation

- Existing Circulation Network
- East Side Access Expansion
- Close Passageway
- Street Entrance



# Activating Plazas

1095 Sixth Avenue POPS

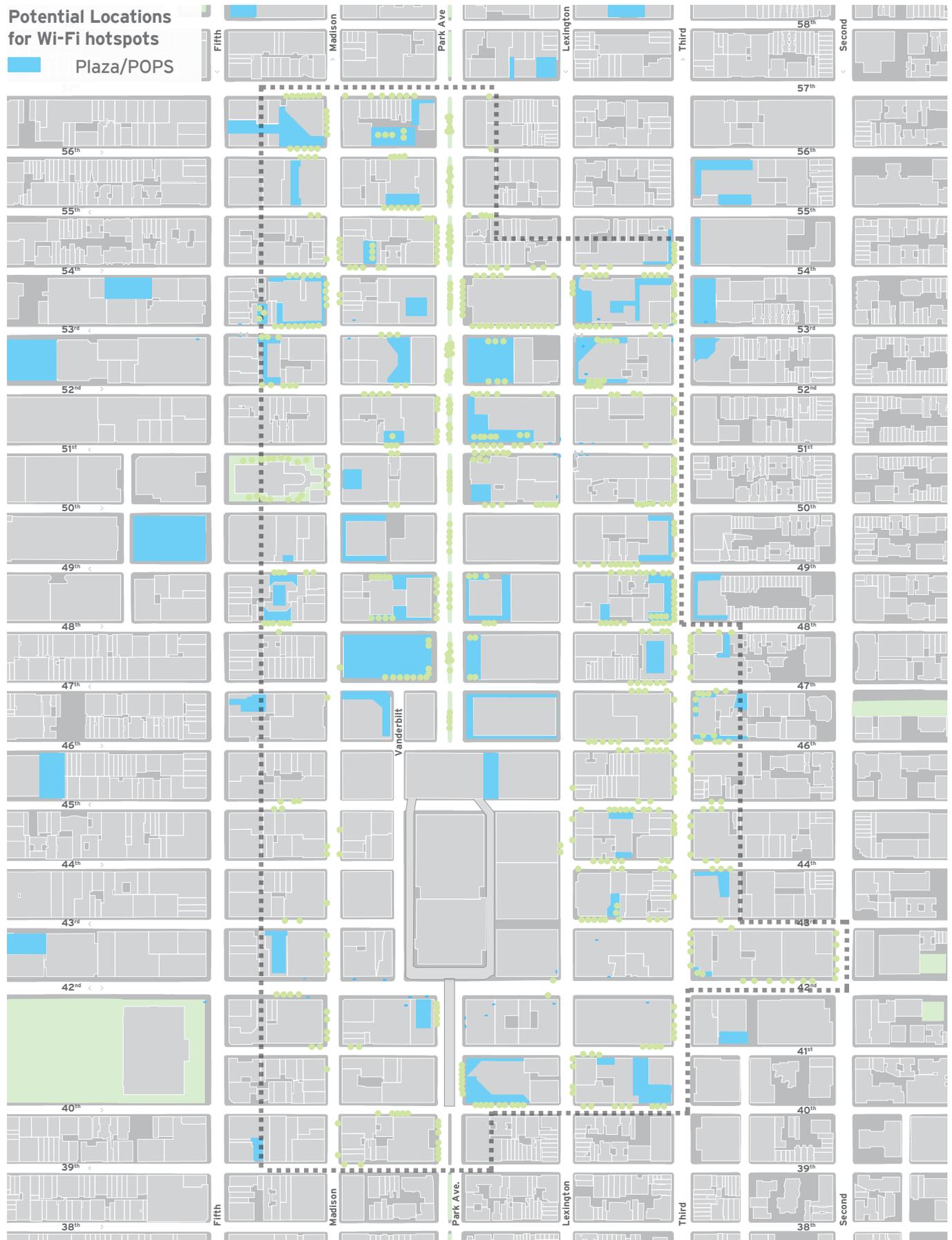
Today we work everywhere, not just at the office. Indoor and outdoor plazas can serve as an extension of the workplace by providing informal spaces for networking and spontaneous meetings.

Plazas and other privately-opened public spaces (POPS) represent almost all of East Midtown's seven acres of open space. A district-wide survey of plazas and POPS, including outreach to property owners, could identify location opportunities for Wi-Fi hotspots, tables and chairs, and mobile charging stations in East Midtown plazas.

590 Madison  
Avenue POPS

### Potential Locations for Wi-Fi hotspots

Plaza/POPS







LADUREE

馬中軒

LADUREE

CANTEN

Subway  
Lexington Ave  
6



# Improving Transit Access

With the vast majority of East Midtown's workers arriving by commuter train, subway, or bus, the transit experience figures prominently in the experience of the public realm.

Many of the subway entrances in East Midtown blend in to the architecture of the surrounding building, making entrances easy to miss – even for a veteran commuter. Coordinated design upgrades could improve the visibility and functionality of subway entrances. A toolkit of potential improvements, developed in consultation with the appropriate government agencies, property owners, and community, could be applied to subway entrances and bus stops depending on site-specific conditions.



Hidden subway entrance on  
53rd Street

### Potential Strategies

- 1 Highly-visible glass awnings
- 2 Distinctive sidewalk treatments, including a compass embedded in the paving to provide guidance for passengers exiting the station
- 3 Sidewalk extensions or bulb-outs where feasible, as determined by traffic analysis, to ease congestion
- 4 Seating, greening, and Wi-Fi hotspots



# Seating

A key finding of the Public Life Public Space Survey was that an overwhelming majority of pedestrian activity in East Midtown is standing and/or waiting for transport. Additionally, public spaces like POPS are underutilized for seating, with the majority of people sitting on “secondary seats” such as ledges or planters, rather than chairs or benches. Seating makes streets more comfortable for transit riders and pedestrians. There are several possibilities for increasing public seating throughout East Midtown.



## Union Square



### Moveable Tables and Chairs

One of the insights of William H. Whyte's study "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces" is that people often choose to "move a chair a few inches this way and that before sitting in it" – to seek sun or shade, and to find room for groups or shift away from them. Colorful, comfortable moveable tables and chairs could be implemented in plazas and other POPS, or as part of curbside seating platforms, in consultation with property owners and local business improvement districts.

### CityBench

The NYC DOT CityBench is an attractive and durable bench that requires little maintenance and is coordinated with the palette of the City's other street furniture. A survey of district-wide sidewalk widths and conditions, with input from the local community and property owners, could generate a list of new CityBench locations throughout East Midtown.



DOT City Bench

# District-Wide Loading Strategy

Delivery trucks are among the primary users of street and sidewalk space in any business district. Due to the nature of their activities, trucks can have a disproportionate impact on the pedestrian experience and traffic congestion. Pallets of materials stacked on the sidewalk, bags of refuse waiting at the curb, trucks that extend beyond their loading docks and into the sidewalk, and delivery trucks that park with two wheels on the curb all present obstacles to pedestrian flow and degrade the quality of the public realm. They are also indicators that delivery and waste removal activities are not being managed efficiently.

The NYC DOT Office of Freight Mobility has completed a preliminary analysis of conditions in East Midtown in conjunction with this report. They have laid out a series of recommendations and areas for further study. Their recommendations include

- For new developments, encourage architects to incorporate the infrastructure needed to take advantage of best practices for delivery and waste management, including interior storage areas, messenger centers, internal goods movement systems, and appropriate loading dock design;
- For large existing buildings, collaborate with owners and management on a 'Delivery and Servicing Plan' that would support the most efficient use of resources and best management of truck activity; and
- Identify district-wide opportunities to better manage curbside space, promote best practices such as off-hour deliveries, and test innovative concepts such as off-site consolidation centers.





03



# Next Steps

This plan strives to reflect the community's aspirations for East Midtown and to articulate a compelling vision for enhancing its public realm. This vision seeks to restore the romance of East Midtown, to celebrate its iconic public spaces and views, and to provide East Midtown with a public realm befitting the world's premier business address.

This plan has identified an ambitious list of projects to pursue. Some of the projects focus on specific locations, while others are district-wide. Each of the projects addresses a challenge or builds on an opportunity that was identified through the team's discovery process.

The next step forward is for the public (community members, local stakeholders and elected officials) to choose which projects should proceed, and when. The City, through the work of its agencies and consultants, will provide technical guidance and support for this process. For example, the City's Department of Transportation will facilitate a discussion of the tradeoffs involved with projects that impact vehicular access, circulation, or loading in order to create new pedestrian plazas and amenities. The agency will also undertake additional traffic modeling to inform how selected projects may affect one another -- and what cumulative impact they may have on the traffic network as a whole.

Projects will be implemented only after continued and extensive stakeholder outreach and review. This input will guide the remaining steps toward implementation, like traffic or engineering analysis, and the identification of alternatives for access, circulation, or loading.

In many cases, the public will have the option to test a particular project by implementing it using temporary materials. This allows the benefits of a project to be enjoyed while certain aspects of the project are tested. After a trial period is complete, modifications can be incorporated into the permanent design.







## Acknowledgments

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