

New York City Department of Transportation RECONSTRUCTION OF PUTNAM PLAZA

Project Overview

The Reconstruction of Putnam Plaza is a capital construction project utilizing city and federal transportation funds to build out an existing plaza that was implemented with interim materials* in 2011. Putnam Plaza is part of DOT's citywide Plaza Program, which transforms underused streets into vibrant, social public spaces. Eligible not-for-profit organizations propose plaza sites for their neighborhoods through a competitive application process. In this case Fulton Area Business Alliance (FAB) was the project applicant and is responsible for maintaining plaza. The Department of Design and Construction (DDC), in close coordination with DOT, is overseeing the design and construction of Putnam Plaza.

*Interim materials are items such as moveable planters, seating, and surface treatments that do not require major construction. NYCDOT uses these materials to expeditiously implement public spaces, usually in anticipation of a more traditional construction project that includes permanent materials and which can take years to implement

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How big is the existing plaza? Will the reconstruction project increase the size?

A. The total existing plaza area is 15,000 SF (7,000 SF of roadway and 8,000 SF of sidewalk) and the size will remain the same after reconstruction.

Q. How much does this project cost?

A. \$3.75 million for design and construction

Q. Where does the project funding come from?

A. The majority comes from the federal Transportation Enhancement Program, with additional funding from the City's PlanNYC budget, as well as allocations from former Council Member Letitia James and former Borough President Markowitz.

Q. Wouldn't it be better to spend this money elsewhere, such as on our schools or affordable housing?

A. The federal Transportation Enhancement funds and City PlanNYC funds are both dedicated to projects of this type, and would have otherwise been spent on similar project types elsewhere. The elected official allocations demonstrate that this project was among their priorities. The City also believes that providing open space in neighborhoods that lack it is an important need along with many other needs in many different areas.

Q. Who is the plaza designer?

A. Thomas Balsley Associates, a New York City landscape architecture firm, is under contract with DDC to design the plaza with community input.

Q. What is the community's role in all of this?

A. Community Involvement is a key part of the process. The interim plaza was designed taking into account feedback received at a community workshop and was endorsed by Community Board 2, the designated community representative body for this area. The capital project design process includes two community workshops where members of the public will have the opportunity to provide design ideas and review multiple design alternatives. A presentation of a preferred design will be made to Community Board 2 in early 2015.

Q. Was the interim plaza a success?

A. The plaza has hosted numerous well-attended events, such as movie nights, concerts, and children's events, and is well used throughout the warm weather seasons by all kinds of people. Based on DOT observations, 64% of plaza users are part of group which demonstrates the sociability of the space. It has therefore provided a quality public space amenity to the neighborhood. DOT will continue to evaluate plaza use

Q. How has the plaza impacted traffic and safety?

A. A traffic analysis conducted by NYCDOT indicates that the "vehicular level of service," a measure of congestion, remained the same before and after the plaza installation. A crash data analysis showed that total injuries in the area were down 76% after the plaza was installed.



Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Q. Was the plaza the reason for the bus route changes in the area?

A. The bus route changes came before the plaza installation. At the request of local elected officials, the B26 bus stop was moved from Putnam Avenue and Downing Street to Fulton Street and Grand Avenue to consolidate it with the B25 bus stop and provide twice the level of service to passengers waiting here to travel to Downtown Brooklyn. As a result, the B26 bus now turns from Putnam Avenue onto Fulton Street via Grand Avenue. Although this turn is currently feasible, the capital project is looking into minor changes to the shape of the intersection that would make the turn easier for bus drivers.

Q. What about crime? Does the plaza encourage or discourage it?

A. There were crime-related concerns at this location long before the plaza was implemented and in fact FAB's advocacy for a plaza was in part motivated by the desire to reduce crime. FAB believes strongly that the creation of the plaza and the range of community members it brings to the area have helped reduce the amount of open drug dealing

and other crimes that were occurring at this location. FAB and NYCDOT were recognized with a Metlife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award for the contributions of the Plaza and other investments to "reduce crime and disorder, spur economic development, and enhance vitality." The capital reconstruction provides the opportunity to further address some of the challenges that the plaza continues to face, such as improved street lighting to help discourage illegal nighttime activity.

Q. How will the plaza reflect the local community?

A. DOT is committed to incorporating community feedback received at the public workshops into the plaza design. In addition, we are exploring the possibility of designating the plaza as a site for temporary public art that could reflect the surrounding community.

Project Timeline

June 2010	FAB started preliminary conversations with community stakeholders
Fall 2010	FAB approached DOT about project
January 2011	DOT agreed to investigate implementation of a plaza with interim materials
Winter/Spring 2011	Further community outreach by FAB
May 2011	Community Workshop for interim materials plaza
June 2011	CB 2 endorsed proposed interim materials plaza design
Summer 2011	Plaza with interim materials installed
Spring 2012	FAB's application for a capital construction plaza accepted by NYCDOT
September 2014	Community Workshop #1
December 2014	Community Workshop #2
December 2015	Design completion (projected)
Summer 2016	Construction start (projected)
2017	Construction completion (projected)

