

# 2008 ANNUAL REPORT



## JACKSON HEIGHTS 78TH STREET PLAY STREET



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APRIL 2009

Community Partners:  
 Jackson Heights Green Alliance  
 Friends of Travers Park/JHBG  
 Western Jackson Heights Alliance  
 Transportation Alternatives



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## *ABOUT THE 78TH STREET PLAY STREET*

The 78th Street Play Street project was organized by a coalition including the Jackson Heights Green Alliance (JHGA), Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG)/Friends of Travers Park, the Western Jackson Heights Alliance and Transportation Alternatives.

This proposal emerged from a series of meetings with the NYC Department of Transportation to address the lack of public space in Jackson Heights and resulted in opening part of 78th Street in Jackson Heights to pedestrians and neighborhood children instead of cars every Sunday during the summer and fall of 2008.

This stretch of 78th Street from Northern Blvd. to 34th Ave. is adjacent to one of the only existing open spaces in Jackson Heights, the 1.919 acre Travers Park.

The 78th Street Play Street provides more space for children to play, serves as a gathering space for neighborhood events, informal socializing, and better access to and more space for the local Greenmarket.

This report summarizes the reasons for increasing access to community open space in Jackson Heights, provides a comprehensive report of the activities facilitated by the Play Street community partners in 2008, and outlines goals for the Play Street in 2009.

*Every weekend that I was in town I shopped at the green market (the fish, honey, eggs and cheese were great additions!), and my husband and I would walk our dog down the play street watching the children enjoying the space. We're planning on having children of our own in a few years, and I can only hope that there are still strong community programs for our family to participate in!*

- Amy Weidner





## *Jackson Heights: Community Profile*

Jackson Heights is a neighborhood designated by the United States Postal Service as the zip code 11372. It is bounded on the west by the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (Interstate 278); on the east by Junction Boulevard; on the north by Northern Boulevard; and on the south by Roosevelt Avenue and the elevated No. 7 subway line. Jackson Heights is separated from surrounding areas by major transportation facilities. In addition to its highways, Jackson Heights has two local arterials (Roosevelt Ave, Northern Blvd) that are heavily used commuting corridors. Due to poor north-south connectivity, Jackson Heights' local streets become heavily congested during peak hours and on weekends.

It is a diverse neighborhood with a large Latino population, predominantly foreign born, as well as smaller, but significant Asian immigrant communities. Within New York City, an incredibly diverse city, Jackson Heights is known for an especially wide mix of people. In 2002, Joseph Salvo, the New York Department of City Planning Population Division Director, was quoted as saying that Queens is by far the most diverse of five boroughs and that Jackson Heights was "The most ethnically diverse area in Queens...no doubt about it," (Queens Press, June 7, 2002).

There were 71,308 people living in the area defined above as Jackson Heights, according to the 2000 US Census. The true population is likely to be larger because of an undercount common to areas with high immigrant populations and due to observable population growth since the 2000 Census. Recent Department of Education statistics cite Jackson Heights to have the fastest growing population under the age of 18.

Over half the population (56 percent) of Jackson Heights was Hispanic or Latino, and an even larger percentage (64 percent) was foreign born, according to the 2000 US Census. Non-Hispanic whites comprise one-fifth the population (21 percent), within which are many recent immigrants from Western Europe, Eastern Europe and American-born residents. One fifth (19 percent) of the neighborhood is Asian, including large Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi and Korean populations.

According to the 2000 Census, much of the immigration to Jackson Heights is relatively recent and many new residents' lack of English language skills poses a barrier. Of the neighborhood's 71,308 residents slightly more than 26 percent (18,541 residents) speak English either "not well" or "not at all".

18.8 percent of Jackson Heights residents were below the federally defined poverty level. Given the high cost of living in New York City, this would seem to be a conservative estimate.

*Please keep the Car-Free 78th St. Playstreet for summer 2009! Our Community needs it !*

*- Robert D. Russo*



*Our family couldn't have enjoyed the playstreet on 78th Street in Jackson Heights more! It was wonderful for our son to have a place to ride his bike without worrying about ballgames (or certainly cars!) interfering. We would show up every Sunday after breakfast and remain there all day until we had to drag our son home at night.*

*- Mike Novak , Meg Fry and David Novak*



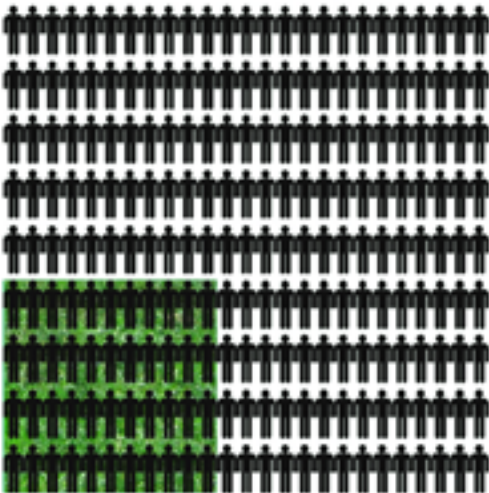
## RESIDENTS PER ACRE OF OPEN SPACE

NYC AVERAGE - 280  
JACKSON HEIGHTS AVERAGE - 14,000



 =60 PEOPLE

NEW YORK CITY



JACKSON HEIGHTS

## The Need for Open Space

Jackson Heights is a dense residential neighborhood with a severe shortage of accessible open space. The neighborhood's high percentage of large apartment buildings deprives most residents of even a backyard experience of nature. Most neighborhood residents, particularly the poorer and immigrant populations, have virtually no access to green space.

City Council District 25, which includes Jackson Heights, ranks last in access to park space. The Jackson Heights neighborhood contains 5.1 acres under Parks Department jurisdiction to serve a population of 71,308. That leaves just one acre of city parkland for every 13,982 residents. This compares with one acre for every 280 people for all of New York City. The lack of available open and green space exposes the residents of Jackson Heights to a wide range of significant adverse impacts.

First, it is an environmental justice issue. Jackson Heights is an incredibly dense neighborhood. Issues related to density such as stormwater runoff, traffic congestion, noise pollution, air quality, social isolation, and others can be ameliorated with even modest increases in the amount of locally accessible green space.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation lists all of Jackson Heights as an "Environmental Justice area," according to Department's "EJ Preliminary Screen Queens County"

Air quality is a significant challenge to the community's health. Beyond the high background levels of air pollution in NYC, the neighborhood faces additional air pollution from the Grand Central Parkway, Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, and traffic congestion on neighborhood streets; the adjacent LaGuardia Airport, one of the nation's 10 busiest airports; and a massive complex of fossil-fuel power plants a short distance upwind in Astoria. Both produce significant emissions from burning fossil fuels, and from their large fuel storage and transferring operations.

Air quality problems and open space are interrelated. The shortage of open space in Jackson Heights exacerbates the impact of nearby air emissions. First, open space allows for a significant dilution of air pollution. Also, tree cover provided by parks plays a significant role in improving air quality. Tree leaves capture particulates and other pollutants; and by reducing surface air temperatures they reduce the formation of ground-level ozone.





Second, it is a social justice issue. Jackson Heights is a richly diverse neighborhood with a wide range of racial, ethnic, social and economic groups represented among its population. However, this also makes large swaths of the population vulnerable to social isolation from language barriers, cultural differences, lack of mobility, health problems, and other constraints. Such populations can, even more than other groups, benefit greatly from access to the amenities provided by locally available open space, including no-cost recreation, exercise, and opportunity for interaction with their neighbors.

The neighborhood's shortage of open space severely limits children's access to green space, recreation and the opportunity to interact with the natural environment. The City Council District containing Jackson Heights is home to nearly 3,200 children per park or playground. Nearly all public open space consists of paved playgrounds and paved school yards (the latter generally are not available for public use). The area's limited recreation space has troubling public health consequences given the growth of childhood obesity. This shortage has only grown worse in recent years. Much previously existing open space has been lost to development (e.g. the athletic fields formerly located alongside the Bulova complex were replaced by a shopping

center). Many schools lack play yards (P.S. 212, P.S. 222, I.S. 230, the Renaissance Charter School, and the St. Joan of Arc School) and those that exist are often fully paved.

In 2008, Jackson Heights was designated as a priority listing by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for their Open Space Conservation Plan.

*The arts and crafts, games and bike/tricycle riding on the playstreet was such a nice traffic-free option and allowed us to stay in the neighborhood AND entertain our child, which are often mutually exclusive. Please, please allow this to continue in 2009--and beyond!*

- Rebecca Cheatham and Eric Willhelm



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*I loved how the Play Street provided room for additional vendors in the farmers' market, and a wide berth for kids to scoot around on their bikes, which they really can't (nor shouldn't) do in the playground.*

- Liza Wyles



## *Opportunities and Initiatives to Expand Travers Park*

This is a critical moment for creating a greener, more sustainable Jackson Heights. Enthusiasm around environmental issues is strong in Jackson Heights, as seen by the existence of community organizations such as the Jackson Heights Green Alliance, Jackson Heights Beautification Group/Friends of Travers Park, and the Western Jackson Heights Alliance. These volunteer civic groups have developed expertise and contacts related to the urban environment through their successful implementation of numerous community initiatives including the Play Street adjacent to Travers Park, which is detailed in the next section. The Jackson Heights Green Alliance and partner organizations have deep roots in the area, with over 50 years of combined institutional experience and knowledge about the community.

We are at a unique moment when it is possible to expand Travers Park in Jackson Heights, a capital project for creating the first green and open space in an extremely densely populated area. A desperate need for sufficient open space for

recreation and for residents to experience nature; mitigating air and noise pollution and the urban heat-island effect; and absorbing storm-water runoff to reduce the water pollution challenge posed by New York City's combined sewer system. Such a plan would be compatible with the goals of New York City's PlaNYC 2030 and larger efforts to combat global warming.

Expanding Travers Park will help foster the participatory involvement of our diverse neighborhood, especially Jackson Heights' majority immigrant community, a population that in many places is often left out of environmental planning and decision-making. This involvement should produce not only a better plan, but also one that's more likely to gain community acceptance and support.

Open and green space and the availability of recreation are important to the area's quality of life and thus are a primary factor in attracting and retaining economic investment. The most rapidly growing areas in the country use quality of life to attract growth. Jackson Heights will not be able to compete if it cannot retain its natural and cultural assets.



## HOW IT CAME TOGETHER

### *The Idea*

The idea was simple: In one of New York City's most dense and park-starved neighborhoods, suspend traffic and parking on Sundays in the summer and fall to allow for games, free play, performances, markets, and other activities on the car-free street. This idea was conceived by a group of Jackson Heights residents and implemented with the approval of the NYC Department of Transportation, NYPD 115th Precinct, Queens Community Board 3, and technical assistance from Transportation Alternatives.

The location of the PlayStreet was 78th Street in Jackson Heights, Queens between Northern Boulevard and 34th Avenue. This stretch of 78th Street is adjacent to Travers Park, a small neighborhood park. With tens of thousands of residents around it, Travers Park is very crowded on weekends, and often there is not enough space for everyone to enjoy the park. The Play Street made it possible for the park to spill into the street, allowing people to stroll, play, attend events and relax in the space, while reducing crowding in the park. The Play Street also allowed the Sunday Greenmarket located on 34th Avenue to expand, add more vendors, and be more accessible and comfortable for shoppers.

The 2008 Play Street was a small, practical step in our search to expand and improve open space. The following pages detail some of the many events that were held in the public space, and illustrates how much the community valued the opportunities provided by even this incremental, temporary expansion of available open space.



### *Organizers*

The organizers of the 78th Street Play Street are organized, ambitious and dedicated community members. Tired of scoring last on the annual citywide list of parkland per capita, organizers from three neighborhood groups—Jackson Heights Green Alliance, the Western Jackson Heights Alliance, and Jackson Heights Beautification Group/ Friends of Travers Park—banded together to make change.

Their first step was to invite DOT officials out to Jackson Heights, to show them around the neighborhood and share with them the group's vision for the community. Two hurdles in these initial communications were the fact that the DOT didn't have an existing neighborhood play street program, and that creating more play streets was not on their list of immediate objectives. Instead, the DOT was focused on bringing a more business-oriented pedestrian street to Jackson Heights. Undeterred, the organizers worked to persuade the DOT that because the commercial district included wholesale retailers, its streets were poor candidates for pedestrian closure. With persistence, the group successfully convinced the agency that a play street would be the best way to realize the goals of PlaNYC in the context of their neighborhood.

78th Street, which abuts one of the community's only parks, is a natural gathering place for residents. Despite the fact that Travers Park has no playing fields—only a large asphalt lot—the park teems with residents throughout summer months. Lively soccer games are often played across the street at a local private school, and on Sundays a Greenmarket is set up nearby on 34th Avenue between 78th and 77th Streets. With the exception of this market, there is no formal commercial activity on 78th Street.



## Community Outreach

After getting a preliminary green light from the DOT, the group developed a visually compelling proposal document, which they used to illustrate the concept and goals of the project. This proposal was written and designed in collaboration with Transportation Alternatives staff members, it included a logo, a community map and a photo-simulation rendering of the street as it might look as a play street.

Because a DOT-sponsored play street was a new initiative, it was a challenge for all involved to develop an approval process and figure out who would issue various permits. The most immediate and important obstacle to overcome was the question of who would maintain legal liability for the street during the event. The DOT and the organizers went back and forth on this question several times, before ultimately agreeing that the DOT would maintain its liability. This was crucial, as the all-volunteer organizing group wasn't engaged in any formal fundraising for the event, meaning the cost of assuming liability insurance would likely have been cost-prohibitive. In choosing to accept liability, the DOT indicated a high level of internal commitment to the project, and a high degree of faith in the organizers, as a result of their close and communicative working relationship.

In lieu of a formal approval process, the DOT required that organizers receive a sign-off from their local Community Board and police precinct, prerequisites that are similar to those necessary to obtain a block party permit from the Street Activity Permit Office. In addition, the agency encouraged the group to meet with as many local stakeholders as possible, including elected officials, the Parks Department, the Greenmarket, the local private school, businesses, and residential building owners.

To tackle this long list, the organizers divided it up and met with stakeholders in small groups, published notices in local newsletters and publications, and made a joint presentation to the local Community Board. The Community Board was supportive, but some group members found it difficult to work with because of the long time frame required for the Board to bring a specific proposal to a vote. Community Boards work slowly and deliberately by design, and because the play street proposal didn't fully emerge until the spring, it didn't neatly coincide with the Community Board's timetable of committee and full board meetings. In spite of their periodic frustration, the organizers persevered, and the Community Board signed off on the proposal in June.



*Sitting on the side walk or in the car free road with our neighbors, painting, playing games, eating etc... had the feel of real community and a suspension of fast paced city life...The car free street allowed my son the rare opportunity to ride his bike with his friends without the restriction of the park/sidewalk.*

- Wesley Hoffman



As suggested by the DOT, the organizing group also met with a wide array of local stakeholders, a tactic that served them well in the end. A particularly clear example can be seen in the case of the Greenmarket: by developing a relationship with this group early on, the organizers saved time and work further into the season, when the Greenmarket's managers offered to help close the street to motor vehicle traffic each morning. Other supportive area stakeholders donated time, food, toys, equipment and money to the play street, all of which greatly enhanced its programming. In the end, play street organizers concluded that the time-consuming process of reaching out to the community had been well worth it, and indispensable to the success of the play street.



## Budget

Considering its duration and level of programming, the Play Street did a lot with little-to-no money. Although individuals in the organizing group made small contributions for specific items, there was no formal fundraising plan. Rather, organizers would anticipate needs a few weeks out, sometimes personally volunteering to pay for things like signs, banners and sports equipment. JHBG very generously donated \$341 to cover various expenses. One of the Greenmarket vendors donated \$300. The project also received support from local business owners, who provided items like baked goods, tables, and chairs. A local political candidate also pitched in, hiring a professional face painter for the 78th Street Play Street's final party. The group was also awarded a \$300 block party grant for this final party by Transportation Alternatives.

A supportive local attorney donated tables and chairs for the event. These were well-used and very important to the success of the event. When the Greenmarket eventually moved some of its vendors to 78th Street from 34th Avenue, the tables and chairs provided another place for people to sit and eat lunch. In addition, the seating encouraged people to linger on the street, and the tables were used for a variety of arts and crafts projects. The street furniture was stored in the basement of a local co-op, along with other supplies.

## Permits

Staff from the DOT's Sustainability Office helped the play street organizers begin the approval process, but the final permit had to be issued by the Queens DOT. It was the Queens DOT that required that the Community Board and Commanding Officer of the precinct support and sign-off on the permit, a process documented above. Having met these requirements, the Queens DOT issued a street closure permit, with the three conditions that a volunteer had to be on the street while it was closed (a part of the liability negotiation outlined previously), that the organizers were required to put up the "No Parking" signs before each event, and that they would also close the street for each event using provided barricades by NYPD.

*We used the playstreet pretty much every Sunday. Our son loved to ride his bike with his friends, and it was nice to have an open space for him to ride without worrying about cars. It was also a great place to talk with neighbors while our kids played.*

*- Shirleyann Kaladjian & Alex Webb*



*The 78th street PlayStreet this past summer was a terrific boon to everyone in the neighborhood. My and my sister's children, along with all their friends in the neighborhood, all enjoyed a safe, open space in which to play games, use scooters, and other activities that the crowding in Travers Park renders too difficult.*

*- Liz Hollander*



*For the first time we did not feel like we had to pack up the kids and find something to do, we had something right here in the neighborhood. We would pack up and be there the whole day, meeting up with so many people from the neighborhood, this was a great asset to building a strong neighborhood and hope it continues.*

*- Christine Toner-Giustra*



## *Programming*

Throughout the summer and into the fall, the 78th Street Play Street had a wide array of local performers appear, along with activities for children and adults. These included things as varied as all-day concerts, dance recitals, street musicians, readings in Bangladeshi, Spanish and English, adult and child learn-to-ride-a-bike workshops, visits from an area animal shelter and the local Fire Department Ladder Company.

And as has been mentioned, the organizers developed a great relationship with the Greenmarket staff and farmers over the course of the summer. After several weeks, the farmers moved a number of market booths to 78th street, along with the tables and chairs mentioned above, which increased foot traffic to the street. The Greenmarket farmers liked this arrangement because they had more space, and locals were happy because the market was no longer blocking the sidewalk on 34th Avenue. In addition to helping with logistical tasks like re-opening the street to cars at the end of each event, some Greenmarket sellers eventually became more involved in the event, donating sports equipment for use on the play street.



## Street Management

By far the biggest organizational challenge involved in planning the 78th Street Play Street was simply arranging for volunteers to monitor the street each week. Lead organizers created an online spreadsheet of six three-hour shifts per closure, covering the hours from 8am to 8pm. In addition, someone had to be assigned to distribute “No Parking” signs up and down the block on Thursday and Friday before each event.

Cleaning the street was another challenge for the participants, though one which ultimately proved to be an opportunity to further improve relations with local stakeholders. Before each event, volunteers swept and picked up trash to make the street entirely safe for kids, and after each event a crew of volunteers led by the JHBG cleaned up any trash left behind. Cleaning up took volunteers almost a full hour in the morning, and around thirty minutes at the end of the day. But by cleaning the street so thoroughly each week, the group won new neighborhood support. Over several weeks, volunteers cleaned out neglected tree pits that were filled with trash and glass. New Yorkers for Parks was so pleased with the hard work of the volunteers that they donated spring bulbs to plant around newly cared-for trees.

By all accounts, the 78th Street Play Street was well loved by the residents of Jackson Heights.

The organizers completed a public survey during the last play street of the season and found that 100% of the 32 respondents felt the play street “enhanced the park and farmers’ market”. In addition, 60% felt that the play street should be extended to both Saturday and Sunday. Another 47% supported the idea of a seasonal closure, and 21% were in favor of a year-round closure. Of everyone surveyed, only 12% thought the play street program should not be extended beyond Sundays; none of the respondents indicated that the play street should not be repeated the following year.

*As a mother the Jackson Heights Play Street is very important to me. We love Travers Park, but it is dangerous when the older kids zoom around on the bikes. I want my kids to be able to ride their bikes/tricycles, but there is really no place in Jackson Heights, except on the play street on Sundays. My kids are too young to ride all the way to Flushing Park. The roads are too busy. The local parks/playgrounds are too crowded. I often brought my 3, 5 and 7 year old to play streets on Sunday. It is close enough so they can ride their bikes/tricycles and there is space for them to ride without hitting other kids. Travers Park is great, but the open area is used for organized sports. The other part is a play ground full of kids, so there is no room for a kid to ride a bike or tricycle. I really hope you can keep the Play Street open.*

*- Fionnuala O'Doherty*





## Community Building

The 78th Street Play Street was held weekly on Sundays, between 6am and 8pm from July through November, on 78th Street between 34th Avenue and Northern Boulevard.

From survey results, it was clear that the play street became a regular neighborhood destination. Those surveyed reported that they visited the play street anywhere from four times over the course of the event, to every week. Play Street attendance was very weather dependant. Organizers found that if there was rain or the weather was extremely hot, the street was nearly empty. Early evenings, from 5pm to 8pm, were the busiest hours, when neighborhood children would bring their bikes to ride up and down the street. In all, pedestrian traffic on the affected stretch of 78th St. increased about 18% from pre-play street levels.

Though parking was one of the more controversial issues for both sides, only two complaints were reported. It was the consensus of the organizers, NYPD, and DOT that it was unsafe to allow cars to enter and exit the street while it was closed, meaning that residents lost usage of a number of parking spaces on closure days. Organizers tried to be sensitive to this issue, and gave residents an opportunity to

adjust their schedules by not ticketing cars until the second month of the event.

They also accommodated the local private school by providing access to a maintenance garage when necessary. An ice cream vendor, who normally stopped his ice cream truck on 78th street next to the playground, registered the most complaints. The ice cream vendor claimed that he lost business because he was forced to relocate further away from the playground; however, many parents were happy that the truck had moved and was no longer idling next to the playground, filling the air with pollution.

*We found the playstreet to be a crucial addition to a neighborhood with so little green space. We shopped weekly at the farmers' market, and hung out on the playstreet with our young daughter who loved to ride her bike and scooter on it. It became a community focal point each Sunday and it is hard now to imagine summer and fall Sundays in Jackson Heights without it.*

*- Chris Stone and Kavita Misra*



## *78th Street Play Street 2008 Events Highlights*

**July 13th:** “Teaching Kids to Ride” Workshop & general bike riding for kids, with Bike New York.

**July 20th:** Sidewalk chalk art sponsored by JHGA.

**July 27th:** (No scheduled events; Colombian Pride Parade on Northern Blvd.)

**August 3rd:** Free children’s book giveaway (English and Spanish) sponsored by Libreria Barco de Papel.

**August 10th:** FDNY “Operation Sidewalk” program with information about fire safety, including distribution of materials in several languages, promotional items and a fire truck parked at the Play Street. Also, Gianni’s Pizzeria provided picnic tables with umbrellas and chairs, and free pizza.

**August 17th:** Representatives from SAVE KITTY (Savekitty.org) brought rescued cats available for adoption.

**August 24th:** Childrens Creative Movement Class led by Valerie Green.

**August 31:** NYC Parks Mobile Stage, Music performance from Jia-Yi He - Harmonica Virtuoso,

Lina Villegas - Latin Music, Jonny Meyers- Folk Music. Also free pizza from Gianni’s Pizzeria.

**September 7th:** Back-to-School Book Giveaway, Giveaway Backpacks and bouncing castle provided by Assemblyman Jose Peralta. Also, story time organized by Queens Library with reading by children’s book author and Jackson Heights resident Janice Milusich.

**September 14th:** Parks Dept. Mobile Unit from Parks Dept. Also, “Read on the carpet” sponsored by The Garden School.

**September 21st:** (Jackson Heights Film and Food Festival) Performance by the Kid’s Fest Band.

**September 28th:** FDNY “Operation Smoke House.” FDNY brought a “smoke house” (on a flat bed) to 78th street, replicating conditions in an actual fire and providing instruction about how to get out of the building, among other things. A fire truck was also present. Also, salsa workshop for adults and kids with instructor Aurora Reyes from Flamenco Latino.

**October 5th:** Jackson Heights Art Expo. Also, the DeFacto Dance company held “The Play Street Dance” with 2 performances.

**October 12th:** Girl Scout activities.

**October 19th:** Spanish/English Theater workshop by Momentos De.

**October 26th:** Make your own mask or costume for Halloween workshop organized by Jackson Heights Green Alliance.

**November 2nd:** Garden School students and parents, along with Play Street volunteers planted bulbs along a large portion of the street which previously was a patch of bare dirt covered in broken glass and garbage.

**November 9th:** “Adult Learn to Ride a Bike” Workshop by Bike New York.

**November 23rd:** Play Street Closing Day Party with face painting, free food from local businesses and neighbors, and free music.





## NEXT STEPS

Following the success of the 2008 Play Street season, JHGA and its partners have outlined a plan which includes short-term and long-term goals. This plan was presented to the community at an open meeting held on Tuesday, April 7. An Urban Planner led discussions where the attendees' feedback and ideas were requested.

### Short Term Goals

In 2009 we are working to establish the Play Street once again, but this time we will apply to have the street closed for the entirety of the Summer Vacation. This will allow us to study the impact this has on the community, the park and the school adjacent to the park. Based on the 2008 experience, we believe that the entire community will benefit greatly from this.

As people become aware of the Play Street and are able to count on it being closed to traffic all day, every day, they will use it in a wide variety of ways. Our experience in the prior year showed us how elderly residents were able to relax and enjoy the fresh air while parents with small children used it to practice bike-riding or enjoy arts and crafts while teenagers organized impromptu games of touch football or rode their skateboards.

Having the street closed to traffic from June 27th to September 7th in 2009 will ensure that everyone in the community can enjoy some urgently-needed open space.

### Travers Park Capital Projects

There is another pressing reason to increase open space next to Travers Park; in 2008 the Parks Department announced a series of large-scale renovations that are to be carried out to Travers Park (<http://www.jhgreen.org/travers-reconstruction.html>). They have indicated that they will be ready to commence construction by the Summer of 2009. Construction has been estimated to last up to one year, perhaps longer.

These renovations would effectively cripple the community's use of the park since at least half of the playgrounds would be closed (including the sprinklers area and half of the playing field on the northern side of the park). During this time it is critical for the neighborhood's health and well-being that access to open space be created through whatever methods possible, making the Play Street an important tool.



### Long Term Goals

JHGA and its partners believe that ultimately, the 78th Street Play Street should become a permanent addition to Travers Park. It is a perfect location for this to take place, with the absence of any residential entrances on the east side of the street the park could expand all the way to the edge of the street, increasing its size by a substantial amount.

This will provide an important opportunity to create some green space for the community. Currently, Travers Park consists of playgrounds, handball courts, basketball courts and a large concrete playing field but very little foliage and no grass. Studies will need to be carried out and workshops will be established to gauge the desires of the community, but the opportunity exists to add some grass and trees to an area that is sorely deprived.

After 2009, JHGA and its partners will work to bring about a permanent closure of the street for 2010 and beyond. We will work closely with city departments and elected officials to effect this change and listen carefully to the desires of the community throughout the process to ensure that the neighborhood's needs are being met.

"...the real-life  
Sesame Street"

- New York Magazine

"kids ventured out of Travers Park into  
adjacent 78th Street ... weaving their bikes  
through the new territory and leaving  
painted handprints on the crosswalk ...  
78th Street seems to have won a new role  
in the life of the surrounding community."

- City Limits Magazine

"... the only play street I  
know of that's organized by  
grassroots groups."

- Streetsblog.com

# 78th Street PLAY STREET

CAR FREE between Northern Blvd & 34th Ave

COMING BACK SUMMER 2009

## From the New York Times:

"My kids grew up in the park, but I feel like this is the first time that they really have room to run around," said Mandy Un, an immigrant from the Chinese island of Macao who lives with her daughter and son in the building, at the corner of 34th Avenue and 78th Street.

She and a neighbor, Lanny Kantono, who is from Indonesia, were sitting under a tree on the car-free portion of 78th Street on Sunday morning, savoring nectarines they had bought at the nearby farmers' market. Across the street, Suzana Garcia, who is from Ecuador, was watching her nephew, Valentín Beyda, age 3, run around with three other boys whom he had just met. In the meantime, Marita Herlihy, who is from Ireland, raced after her 5-year-old daughter, Aideen, who was learning to ride a bicycle.

"You couldn't do it if there were cars coming by," Ms. Herlihy said. "But this is also great because it brings together all the different types of people who live in this neighborhood."