



Prospect Heights
Neighborhood
Development Council

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Brooklyn, NY 11238

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October 17, 2023

Mayor Eric Adams
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams:

As the local partner for Open Streets on Vanderbilt Avenue and Underhill Avenue, we write to request a meeting with you to discuss completing work on the Underhill Avenue Bike Boulevard. After more than two years of community engagement by DOT, and implementation of the Bike Boulevard nearly finished, your office halted work on the project in August due to complaints from some residents, leaving our neighborhood with an incomplete street lacking important features required for the safety of cyclists, pedestrians and motorists.

The Underhill Avenue Bike Boulevard is implemented with “light touch” techniques that can be adjusted based on DOT’s observation of use. At a town hall meeting on October 12, Commissioner Rodriguez and yourself [stated](#) that DOT would conduct door-to-door outreach to gather feedback about the Bike Boulevard. Gathering feedback is a step that should be taken *after* implementation is complete, not before. Having community members comment on a new street design before it has been completed is not a meaningful exercise, and delaying the completion of the work puts users of the street at risk. In short, we ask that you *just let DOT finish the job*. Any further delay makes no sense and is irresponsible.

The Bike Boulevard is necessary as a traffic calming measure on a local street that has in the past been used as a shortcut for through drivers, leading to serious crashes, particularly in the vicinity of James Forten Playground.



Underhill Ave Crash Data 2016 to 2020
(Eastern Parkway to Pacific Street)

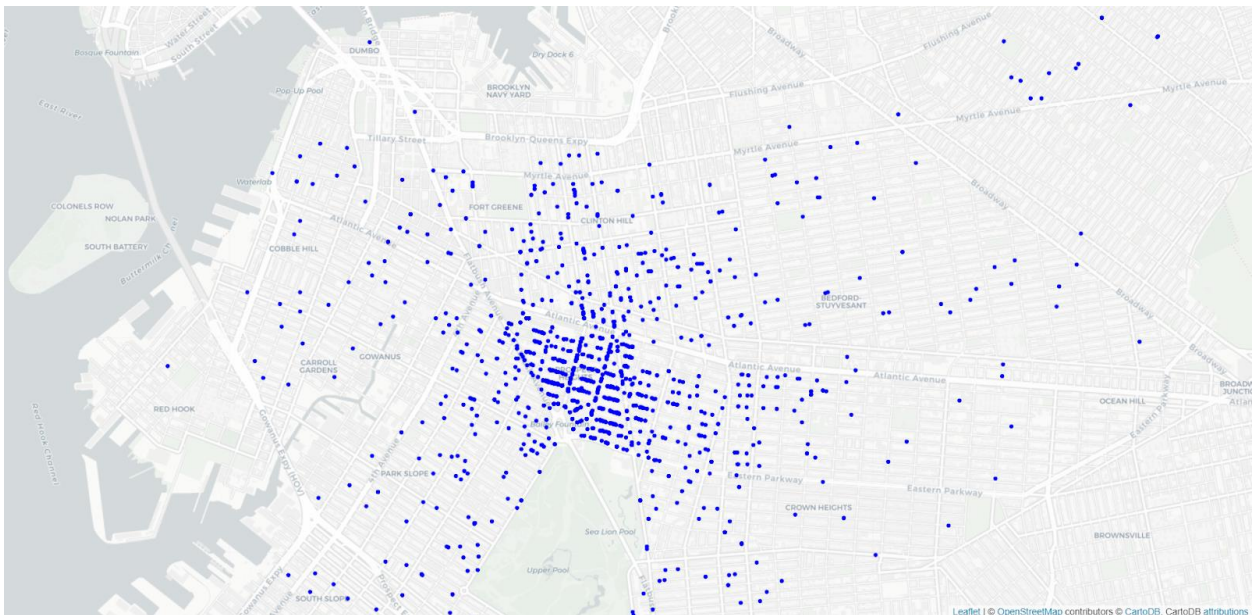
Injury Summary, 2016-2020 (5 Years)

Mode	Total Injuries	Severe Injuries	Fatalities	KSI
Pedestrian	27	2	0	2
Bicyclist	19	2	0	2
Motor Vehicle Occupant	82	2	0	2
Other Motorized	0	0	0	0
Total	128	6	0	6

Source: Fatalities: NYCDOT, Injuries: NYSDOT KSI: Persons Killed or Severely Injured

Prior to the introduction of Open Streets on Underhill Avenue, it was a Vision Zero priority street. Traffic calming through Open Streets led to a significant reduction in crashes beginning in 2020. The Bike Boulevard design provides more comprehensive traffic calming without the need to deploy metal barriers.

Response to our recent Prospect Heights Streets for People petition (with over 2,600 signatures to date) demonstrates that the Underhill Avenue Bike Boulevard, the Underhill Plaza, and the Vanderbilt Avenue Open Street have strong community support centered in the Prospect Heights neighborhood, extending to surrounding neighborhoods.



We point out that those initiatives are in no sense a case of outsiders “dictating” to long-time residents, as you suggested at the town hall meeting. PHNDNC has served the Prospect Heights community for twenty years, and has a history of collaborating with DOT and elected officials to improve street conditions in this neighborhood.

- In 2005, we worked with Borough President Markowitz, Council Member Letita James and Transportation Alternatives and DOT to [implement](#) the safer, traffic-calmed design for Vanderbilt Avenue that exists today.
- In 2013, Mayor Bloomberg [approved](#) PHNDC's application for a Neighborhood Slow Zone in Prospect Heights, an application which you supported as State Senator.
- In 2014, PHNDC worked with Council Member Laurie Cumbo, Transportation Alternatives, Tri-State Transportation Campaign and the New York League of Conservation Voters to have the de Blasio administration [designate](#) Atlantic Avenue one of New York City's first arterial slow zones.
- In 2017, as Borough President, you [provided](#) PHNDC with a capital grant of \$575,000 for DOT to install historic street lighting on Vanderbilt Avenue.
- And in 2020, Mayor de Blasio approved PHNDC's Open Streets for Vanderbilt Avenue, of which the New York Times later [wrote](#), "Of all the ways the pandemic reshaped New York City's streetscape, the most profound example might have been found on Vanderbilt Avenue as it cut through brownstone Brooklyn."

In sum, PHNDC is a long-term advocate for better streets in Prospect Heights, promoting successful projects that have enjoyed broad political and popular support, and which have received citywide acclaim.

We note that several large streets initiatives for Prospect Heights are in either proposal or planning stages. These include capital projects being planned for [Grand Army Plaza](#), Underhill Avenue and Vanderbilt Avenue; as well as a redesign of Atlantic Avenue [proposed](#) to be included in the [Atlantic Avenue Mixed Use Plan](#), together with Bike Boulevards to be implemented on Bergen and Dean Streets, and other street improvements. There is simply no way projects of that scale can be implemented by encouraging a tug of war among supporters and opponents.

You have cast your role as Mayor as one of "balancing out" community opinions on transportation projects. We believe you have a greater responsibility to ensure benefits of projects that flow from City policies on [improving street safety](#), [reducing carbon emissions](#), and [promoting economic development](#) are explained to New Yorkers in a way that acknowledges their concerns, while diffusing conflict in communities already struggling with issues like displacement. We look forward to a discussion of how that can be done.

We appreciate your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gib Veconi". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Gib Veconi
Chair