

Meeting Summary
City of Long Beach NY Forward
Public Workshop #2
Long Beach Public Library, Second Floor Auditorium
October 4, 2023
7:00-9:00 PM

I. Welcome

Patti Bourne, Director of Economic Development & Planning for the City of Long Beach, started the meeting with an introduction of the NY Forward (NYF) process and project team. Susan Favate of BFJ Planning then kicked off the presentation by introducing the consultant and NY State team, City staff, and the Local Planning Committee (LPC), who oversees the Long Beach NYF process.

II. Review of NYF Program and Elements

Ms. Favate explained that NYF is an outgrowth of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) program, launched by New York State in 2016 to improve the vitality of urban centers across the State. The City of Long Beach is one of two communities in Long Island selected for NYF, each receiving awards of \$4.5 million. Each community is led by a consultant team who works with municipal staff and the LPC to guide the planning process, develop projects to recommend to the State, and document a Strategic Investment Plan.

Ms. Favate described the following goals to be achieved through the NYF process:

- Enhance downtown living and quality of life
- Create an active downtown with a mix of uses
- Provide diverse employment opportunities for a variety of skill sets and salary levels
- Create diverse housing options for all income levels
- Provide enhanced public spaces that serve those of all ages and abilities
- Encourage the reduction of greenhouse emissions
- Grow the local property tax base

The planning process includes the following phases:

- Vision and Goals: Refine the community's future vision, establish priorities, and gather input.
- Opportunities and Challenges: Understand the community's unique characteristics and key opportunities.
- Project Identification and Evaluation: Identify, review, and evaluate potential projects.
- Project Recommendations: Recommend projects that align with the public's goals.

Ms. Favate presented an overview of the NYF timeline, noting the upcoming final LPC meeting and opportunities for public input through the online survey. She then shared a map of the current Long Beach NYF boundary, developed with input from the LPC. Recently expanded, the NYF boundary captures the area surrounding LIRR station, the commercial corridor along Park Avenue, and the area surrounding Long Beach Boulevard to the north of Park Avenue.

Suzanne Goldberg of BFJ Planning gave an overview of past and upcoming public engagement opportunities, including the final LPC meeting on October 18, 2023, and the online public survey open until October 12, 2023. She also provided a summary of key findings from the “Ideas Wall,” an online engagement exercise that ran from July to August. Main themes gathered from the “Ideas Wall” included adding bike lanes, safer/more marked crossings, and more greenery on Park Avenue; as well as more art activities, improvements to the train station area, sidewalk improvements, and enhanced signage and lighting at intersections. Ms. Goldberg invited attendees to share the public survey, open until October 12, 2023. The objective is to gain public input on each of the projects. The survey can be accessed via www.LongBeachNYForward.com.

III. Vision

Ms. Goldberg explained that the purpose of developing Downtown Vision, Goals, and Strategies is to move from a vision that guides the process, to action-oriented goals to move toward the vision, to revitalization strategies that are discrete, measurable actions required to achieve a goal.

Preliminary Downtown Vision:

Long Beach will capitalize on its unique combination of being a barrier-island, beach-centric and transit-oriented community by making improvements to its streetscapes, public spaces, multi-modal transportation network and wayfinding to leverage private investment in its downtown, creating jobs, affordable housing and economic development opportunities.

IV. Goals & Proposed Projects

Ms. Goldberg gave an overview of the eligible and ineligible projects for NYF funding, as well as project evaluation criteria.

Eligible projects include:

- New Development and/or Rehabilitation of Existing Downtown Buildings
- Public Improvement Projects
- Small Project Fund
- Branding & Marketing

Ineligible projects include:

- Planning Activities
- Operations & Maintenance
- Pre-Award Costs
- Property Acquisition
- Training & Other Program Expenses
- Expenses Related to Existing Programs

Project Evaluation Criteria:

- Alignment with State and Local Goals: NYF State Goals
- Catalytic Effect
- Project Readiness

- Eligible Project Type
- Cost Effectiveness
- Co-Benefits

Silvia Del Fava of BFJ Planning described an overview of the Long Beach NYF Proposed Projects, both public and private. Ms. Del Fava gave a summary of each of the projects organized by goal.

Downtown Goal #1:

Improve street safety and connectivity along Park Avenue to make it pedestrian-friendly, accessible, and easy to navigate for all.

Goal #1 Potential Projects:

- Park Ave Improvements (Public Project)
 - Pedestrian safety and streetscape improvements along the section of Park Avenue that sees the most pedestrian usage due to the presence of the Long Beach LIRR station. Main elements of the project include:
 - Creating generous crossing and pedestrian safety measures at National Boulevard
 - Upgrading existing crosswalks to stamped, colored concrete to match new crosswalk at Kennedy Plaza
 - Adding more planting to protect pedestrians from traffic, and to provide shade and crosswalks at parking, retain and improve existing plantings
 - Expanding the intersection to the west of the rail station, expand sidewalk / narrow bus drive to create modest brick plaza
 - Creating generous crossing and pedestrian safety measures: improve taxi flow, add curbs and median and enlarge pedestrian gathering area at Rev JJ Evans Boulevard

Downtown Goal #2:

Establish Downtown Long Beach as a year-round regional destination that leverages its multi-modal transit-oriented location to provide job and housing opportunities, as well as a diverse range of activities including arts, entertainment and recreation for residents and visitors alike.

- Dance Loft (Private Project)
 - Lot was formerly the NuClear Dry Cleaners. Ground floor will be subdivided into multiple retail spaces. Second floor will be a mixed-use performing arts rehearsal & performance space, including the Dance Loft.
 - NYF funding requested for remediation and construction of the building at large, performance space equipment and fit-out and signage.
- Long Beach Public Library Auditorium (Non-Profit Project)
 - Proposal to renovate the library's auditorium to a professional-level performance space.
 - The project would include replacement of stage; audio, lighting, visual and streaming improvements; updated "Green Room" to be a multi-purpose/ available for creative endeavors including music and podcast recording.

- Professional Youth Theatre (Private Project)
 - Rehabilitate a black box theater (75 E. Walnut Street) and a mainstage theater (305 Riverside Blvd). The project would be used as a multi-purpose performing arts and fine arts venue.
 - A member of the public inquired whether a sponsor can apply for more than one project. The consultant team responded that there are no regulations in the NYF program to prevent a sponsor from applying for more than one project.
 - The BFJ Team also explained that all projects are vetted to assess the capacity of the sponsor to carry out the proposed project(s); if there are concerns on the sponsor's capacity, the project may not be considered as strong a project and could be removed from the final slate for State recommendation.
- Two-Family Housing Conversions (Private Project)
 - Conversion of 5 existing single-family homes into two-family homes in the North Park neighborhood. All five homes are currently rented at market rate. This project would double the number of units and provide affordable housing, which is an expressed need of the City.
 - The proposed 5 new two-family units generated from the project would be 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom units. They would also have the following Affordability/ Workforce Housing components:
 - Workforce housing at 80-100% Area Median Income (AMI) (\$123,100 - \$156,300) based on US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) guidelines for a household of 4
 - Commitment to have one unit at 80% AMI (\$123,100)
 - Rent would be 30% of AMI per HUD guidelines
 - Duration of workforce housing designation: 10-15 years
- Bridgeworks Campus Upgrades (Private Project)
 - Upgrades to the workspace facility include the following:
 - Resilient plantings/flower beds
 - Exterior upgrades to facilitate installation of murals
 - Creation of exterior roof deck for expanded workspace, events and workshops
- Barrier Brewing Co. (Phase 2)
 - Future tenant is planning to start Phase 1 of this project shortly, which consists of creating a satellite taproom, lounge, and brewery for the first satellite location of Barrier Brewing Company. The taproom/lounge will sell multiple draft beer options, NYS spirits, wine, pre-packaged food items from NYS vendors in the centrally-located, currently vacant space. The work and investment for this initial phase will include interior space upgrades and exterior signage.
 - NYF Funding is requested for Phase 2 of this project consisting of building/site improvements including new glass garage doors, exterior improvements, & outdoor seating.

Downtown Goal #3:

Improve public spaces through the integration of landscaping, street furniture, wayfinding and public art to strengthen and enhance connections between civic spaces.

- Kennedy Plaza Redesign (Public Project)
 - The scope of this project is to unify and improve the civic spaces of Kennedy Plaza and surroundings using a combination of urban design elements such as paving patterns, landscaping, wayfinding, and enhanced pedestrian crossings. The main project elements include:
 - Street in front of City Hall is raised to be same height, linking plaza and City Hall entrance
 - Single paving pattern creates enlarged public space traffic pattern does not change, and existing parking remains
 - Bollards to protect pedestrians and operable bollards which can close off street from traffic
 - General redesign of Kennedy Plaza (new paving, more plants & trees, seating areas)
 - Fountain (half size of the current) becomes at-grade splash pad
 - Existing memorials and dedication bricks remain in place (Holocaust, WWII, JFK)
 - New stamped concrete crosswalks

Downtown Goal #4:

Foster an attractive downtown environment through cohesive streetscape treatments, including façade upgrades and gateway improvements, as well as signage and wayfinding enhancements, to reinforce Long Beach's identity and create a unique sense of place.

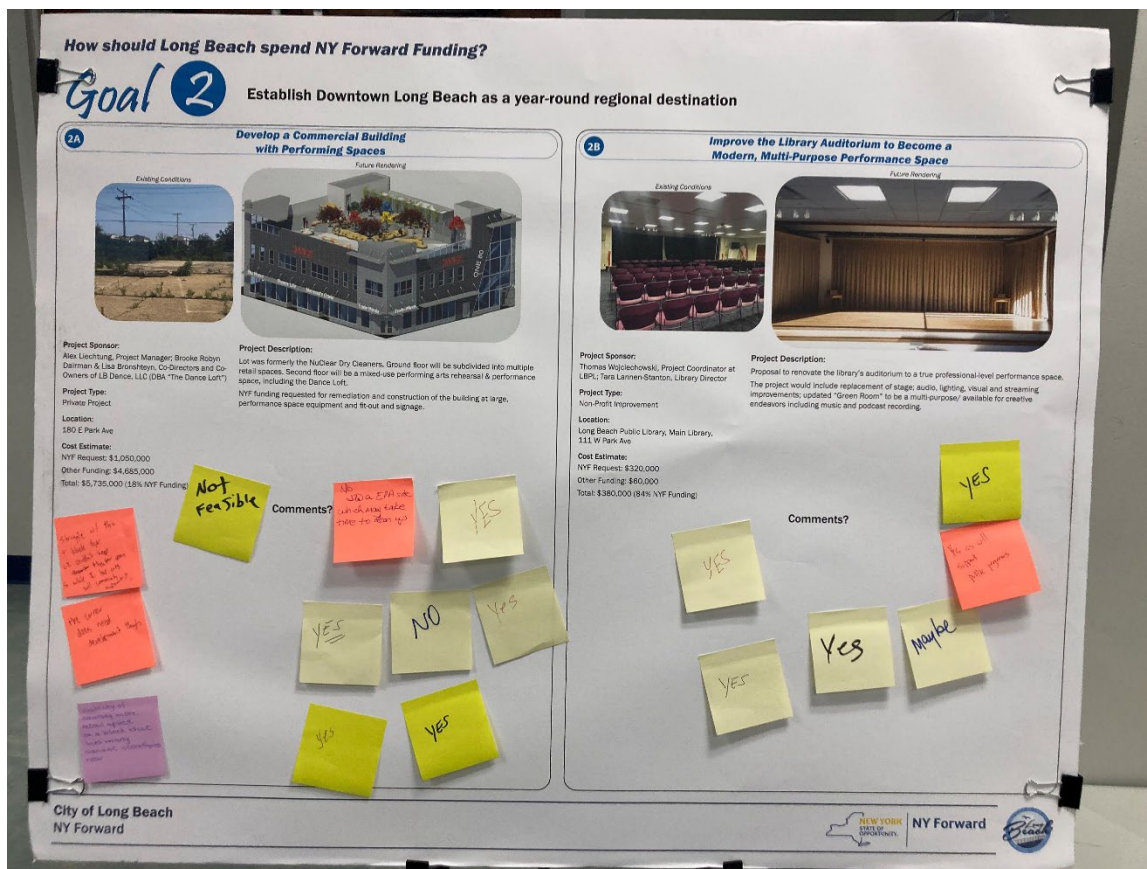
- Long Beach Public Library Exterior (Non-Profit Project)
 - Repaint facade, contract with local artists for library themed murals, redo external signage, redesign plant beds/streetscape, add accessible bike racks, add small café-style seating area, create a Main Library "Little Free Library."
- Wayfinding and Signage (Public Project)
 - This project will improve the experience for people that are not familiar with the area and will help them connect to different places that are close to each other and yet difficult to navigate at the moment. Additionally, this wayfinding/signage project will create a more identifiable and consistent theme to put Central Park Avenue on a map and create its own identity as a true downtown.
 - Key elements will include:
 - Using lighting, signage and color / murals to help people find their way out of the rail station
 - Installing a suite of signage: all elements share design concept (modern but easy to maintain and durable)
 - Installing a digital sign at Kennedy Plaza
 - Creating Bold Gateway Sign / 3D Element at entrance locations
- Small Project Fund
 - The Small Project Fund can include a range of downtown projects such as façade enhancements, building renovation improvements to commercial or mixed-use spaces, business assistance, or public art. Funds are capped at \$300,000. Eligible

Project 1A: Improve Connectivity and Streetscape Along central Park Avenue:
Comments were generally positive.

Project 1B: Redesign Kennedy Plaza for Better Integration with Surroundings:
Feedback was mixed, with few comments.

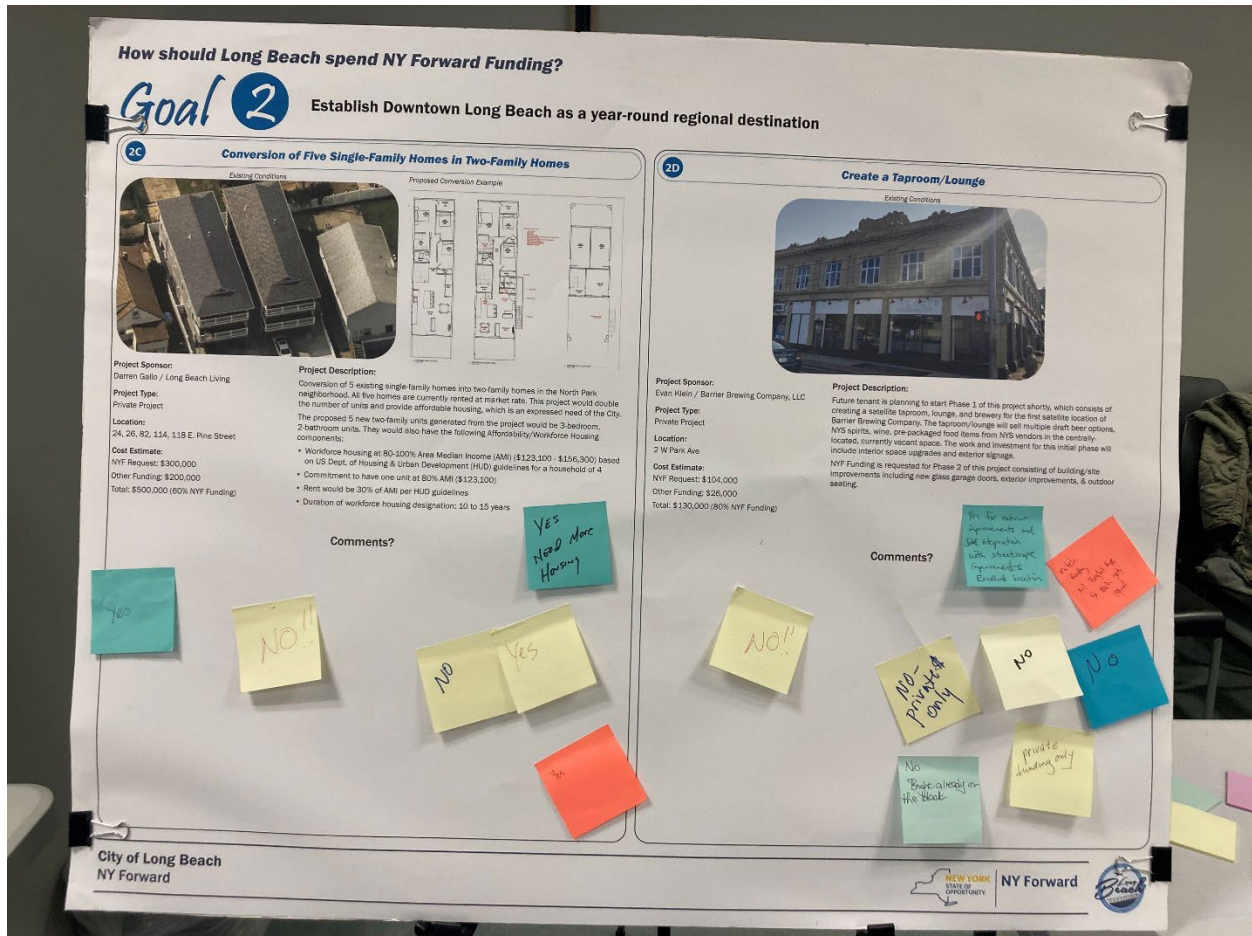
Project 4A: Develop and Implement a Wayfinding & Signage Program:
Comments were generally supportive of adding more positive signage in the NYF area; however one comment viewed digital signage as unfavorable.

- No to digital signage.
- There are so many signs saying “no” in this town. Can we develop a clearer message and present it in positive terms?
- Yes, North Long Beach Rd needs help.



Project 2A: Develop a Commercial Building with Performing Space
Comments are mostly supportive, with some concerns due to the contaminated nature of the site.

- Struggle with this project and the black box theater, but the corner does need development.
- Viability of creating more retail space on a block that has many vacant storefronts now.
- Not feasible.
- No, it's an EPA site which may take time to clean up.



Project 2C: Conversion of Five Single-Family Homes in Two-Family Homes.

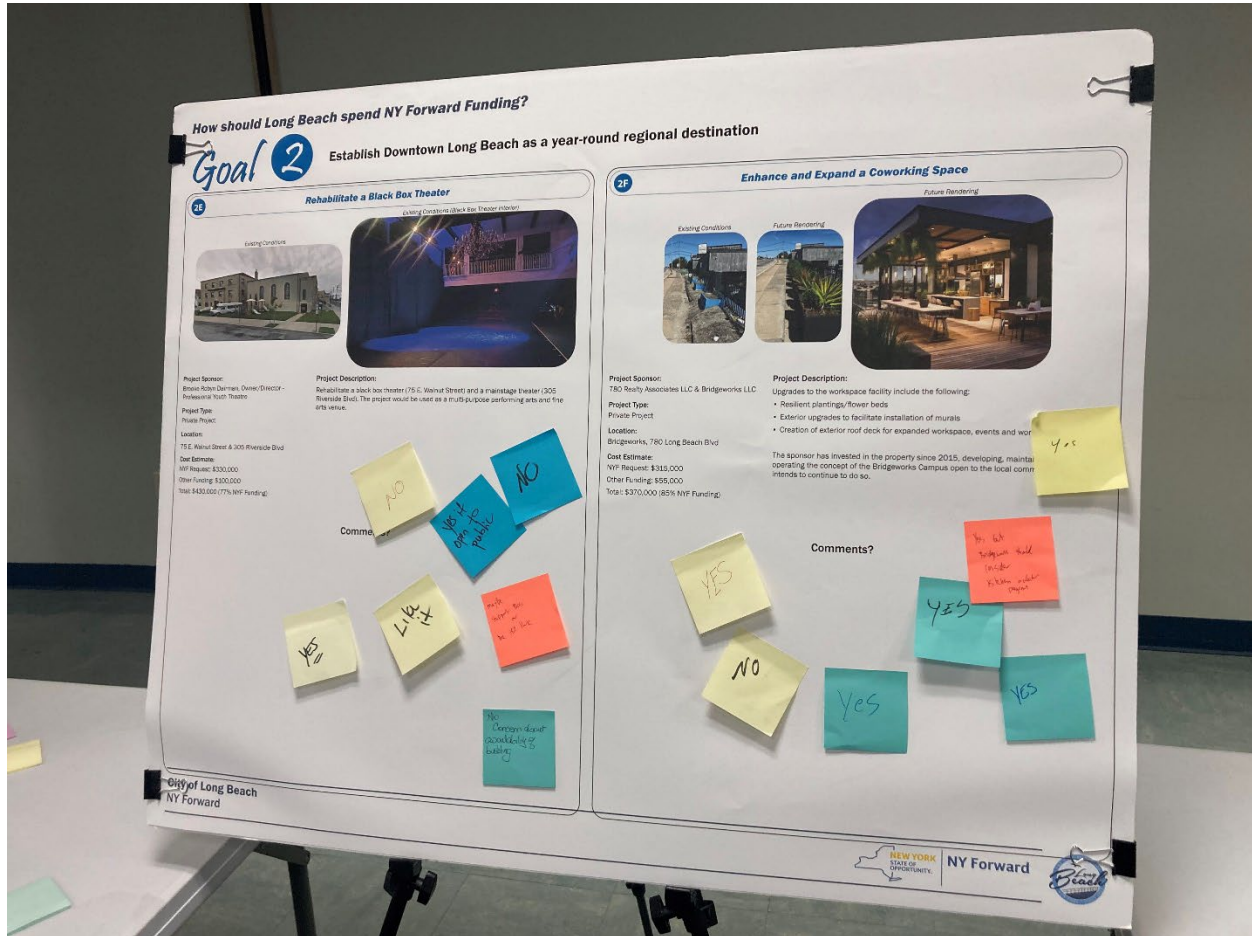
Feedback for this project was mixed but generally supportive of creating more housing opportunities.

- Yes, need more housing

Project 2D: Create a Taproom/Lounge

Comments focused on potential competition with a nearby brewery and the use of public funds.

- No, brewery already on that block.
- Private funding only.
- Matching funding with Bright Eye so each gets equal.
- Yes, for exterior improvements and integration with streetscape improvements. Excellent location.



Project 2E: Rehabilitate a Black Box Theater:

Comments were generally positive but there was uncertainty regarding the feasibility of using this building.

- Yes to open to the public.
- No, concern about availability of building.

Project 2F: Enhance and Expand a Coworking Space

Comments were primarily in favor of supporting this project.

- Yes but Bridgeworks should consider kitchen.



Project 4B: Upgrade the Upper Floor Façade of Bright Eye Beer

Comments were supportive of this project, and one attendee would like to see further façade improvements on the block.

- Yes if whole block.
- Yes I think Barrier and Bright Eye should get matching.

Project 4C: Upgrade the Façade and Exterior Spaces of the Library

Feedback was positive toward improving the exterior of the library and adding café-style seating.

- Yes, especially to café exterior seating.

Project 4D: Implement a Small Project Fund

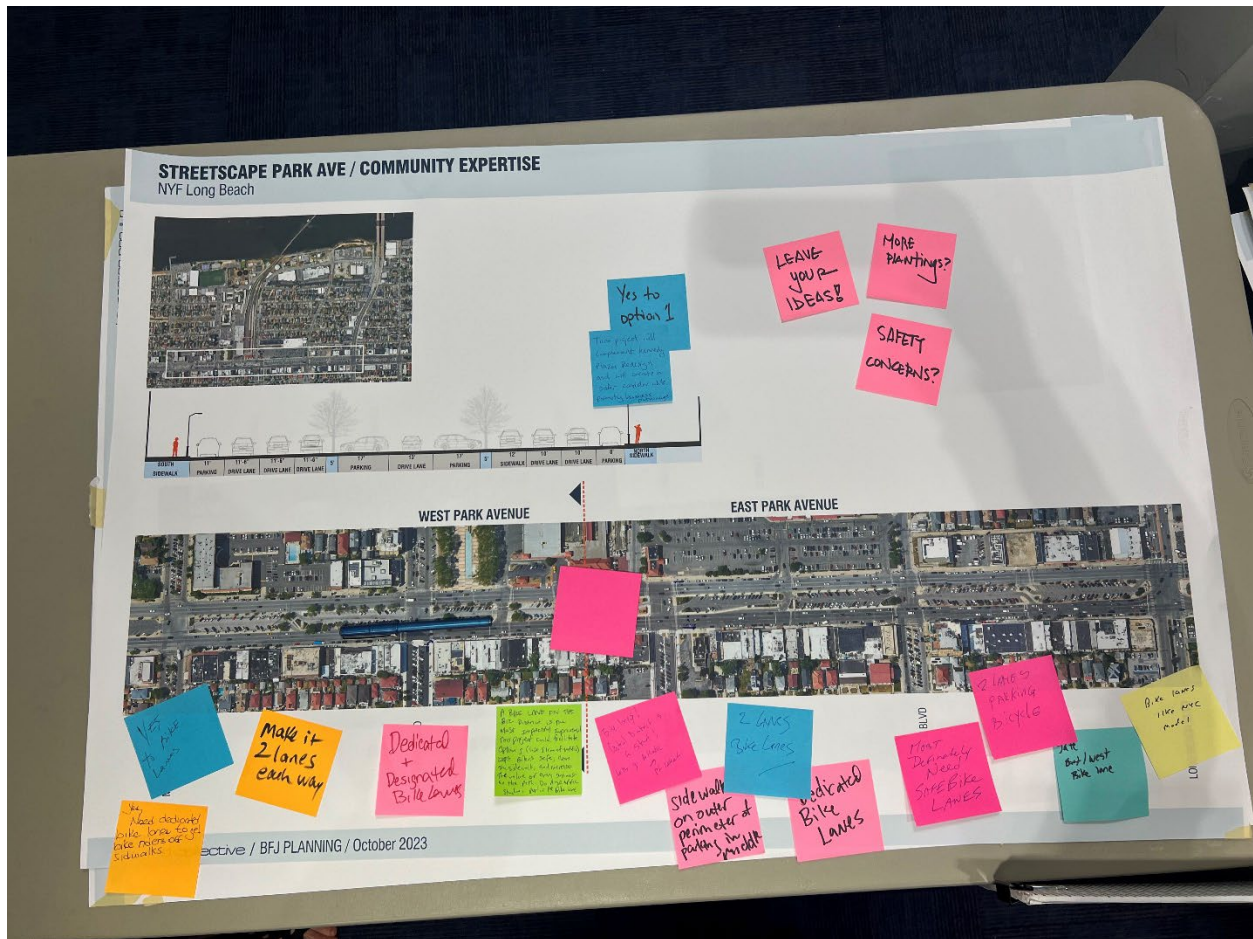
Comments were in favor of increasing the cohesiveness and marketing of small businesses in the area, as well as adding public art.

- Cohesive amenities (plant, signage, etc.)
- Branding and marketing (examples: Bridge of Flowers (Massachusetts), the Painted Village in the Sky (Tannersville, NY))

- Yes, think about LB Arts Council when doing murals.

Interactive Design Exercise for the Public Projects

The following boards sought to capture feedback on the preliminary proposed public projects as well as additional input from the public on elements that may be missing. The key takeaway from this exercise was the general enthusiasm on the idea of including bike lanes as part of Park Avenue improvements.



Streetscape Park Ave

- Make it two lanes each way.
- Yes need dedicated bike lane to get bike riders off sidewalks.
- Dedicated and designated bike lanes.
- Sidewalk on outer perimeter of parking in median.
- Most definitely need bike lanes.
- A bike lane in the business district is the most impactful improvement. This project could facilitate losing one lane of traffic. Keeps bikers safe, clears the sidewalk, and increases the value of every business on the path. Do a traffic study.

