

Cultural Festival Coming to Newly-Renovated Dunningham Triangle

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QUEENS — A festival highlighting local food, music and dancing is coming to the newly-renovated Triangle in Jackson Heights on Friday.

Viva La Comida!, sponsored by the 82nd Street Partnership, will celebrate the culture of Jackson Heights and Elmhurst from 4 to 9 p.m.

"We're going to use Dunningham Triangle in a way it hasn't been used before," said 82nd Street Partnership Executive Director Seth Taylor. "For one night it's just going to be a wonderful, vibrant gathering space."

The partnership is closing off Ithaca Street between 82nd Street and Baxter Avenue to make room for the event, with performances by the New York Jazz Academy, as well as local musicians who will each perform inside the triangle.

Vendors from across the city will be there, including Jackson Heights' own Arepa Lady and Tacos La Familia, and Corona's Tortas Nezas, a finalist for this year's Vendy awards.

The festival will also feature a new truck from Washington Heights' Patacon Pisao, and the Chipper Truck from The Bronx, billed as the only Irish food truck in the city. Jeffrey Orlick, who runs the website Jeffrey Tastes, was charged with putting together the culinary talent.

"I've always wanted to do a festival with these guys," Orlick said. "They deserve a lot more attention than they're getting, and this is the perfect venue for them to go down."

Organizers rented out the lobby of the Jackson Heights Cinema for a pop-up crafts market, and the Silleteros de Santa Elena from Colombia will be arranging ornate flower displays.

Dunningham Triangle is the third public space added to an area that was ranked second-to-last in city parkland acres per resident by park advocacy group New Yorkers for Parks.

Last year saw the creation of a pedestrian plaza on 37th Road between 73rd and 74th streets. And in August, the Jackson Heights Green Alliance announced that the seasonal "play street" on 78th Street between 34th Avenue and Northern Boulevard would be transformed into a year-round plaza.

The 82nd Street Partnership worked with local politicians to secure a \$200,000 capital grant for the renovation of Dunningham Triangle in May. The project received \$150,000 from the office of Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and \$50,000 from the mayor's office.

"When we looked at Dunningham Triangle it really stood out as a great opportunity," Taylor said. "Our role is to work with the community to come up with a vision for the space."