

Community Plaza Proposed to Fight Crime in Jackson Heights

By Katie Honan on October 21, 2013 1:40pm | *Updated 5 hrs ago*



A 69-year-old man was fatally stabbed near Roosevelt Avenue and 90th Street in Jackson Heights on Monday, Sept. 16, 2013.

JACKSON HEIGHTS — A business improvement group and local police say they plan to fight crime with flowers, tables and chairs along a bustling stretch of Roosevelt Avenue under the 7 train where two men were recently murdered in broad daylight.

Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras and the 82nd Street Partnership announced the creation of the 90th Street Plaza in a small triangle of land underneath the 90th Street-Elmhurst stop — which some have compared to the old Times Square — starting this week.

The community plaza is being sponsored by the Jackson Heights-Corona Business Improvement District steering committee — which is still in the planning stages — according to Seth Taylor, the president of the 82nd Street BID.

The plaza — based on the idea that reclaiming public land helps deter crime — will be temporary, and will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., he said.

Under the plan, the streets will be power washed and the area will feature new planters and flowers as well as tables and chairs that had been used at the annual Viva La Comida event, according to Taylor. It will also feature cultural events, with more details to be announced.

Ferreras called the 90th Street plaza plan "exceptional," and said it can start to help residents feel safe in their neighborhood.

"Considering that two murders recently occurred in this area, the reclaiming of this space could not come at a better time," she said.

"What our community desperately needs right now is to feel that we can work through whatever issues arise and be more united for it."

The plaza is near the site of two separate murders in broad daylight last month, including one man who was stabbed to death on 90th Street after dropping his wife off at the doctor.

Another man was chased by a gang and shot to death days later nearby on Roosevelt Avenue.

Neighbors and business owners said at the time that they didn't feel safe in the area — and many said they hoped for more police officers along the commercial stretch.

State Sen. Jose Peralta called for more police to monitor the area, even calling the neighborhood "the new Times Square."

The new plaza will be just one part of a broader effort to deter crime in the area, Taylor said.

If it takes off, and organizers receive positive community feedback, they'll make a formal request to the city to make it permanent, he said.

"We're trying to make it a space where people feel comfortable relaxing and enjoying their surroundings," he said.

"It's the Jane Jacobs philosophy — if you make spaces great and you attract people into the spaces and you have more eyes on the street, and that is a deterrent to crime," he said.