

The background image shows a busy school street. In the foreground, a group of students is walking across the street. They are wearing maroon jackets and khaki pants, typical of a school uniform. Some are carrying backpacks. In the background, a brick school building with many windows is visible. A sign above one of the entrances reads "UNION SCHOOL". There are trees and a black metal fence in front of the building. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Streets are for the students!

Barriers to entry and *suggestions for the future* of the NYC *open streets for schools* program

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Note: all photos are taken by the author unless otherwise stated.

Summary

“School streets” or “play streets” are open streets that are run, maintained, and programmed by adjacent or nearby schools ranging from 3-k to higher education.

School streets have been recognized as a successful way of reducing car fatalities. In the United Kingdom, a recent report by Doolin O’Reilly found that “one in four cars on the road at peak times are generated by the school run and that children face an increased risk of being fatally struck by a vehicle during this period.” In response, Hackney School, just outside of London, created a robust School Streets pilot across five different schools and public toolkit to reduce traffic fatalities and create space for children’s programming. In response to this new program, schools did not just find a decrease in fatalities and traffic, but also air pollution, increased walking and cycling. Part of this program’s success is because “it does not ban driving to school; rather it encourages parents to either use sustainable transportation for their school run or, failing that, park their vehicle away from the school gate and walk the final section of their journey.”

While school streets in NYC are a beautiful opportunity to create safer schools, the program has fallen short. Recent reporting by StreetsBlog found that “on school days, streets near schools are more dangerous on average than other city streets.

During the 8 a.m. hour, when hundreds of thousands of children stream into 1,600 city-run public schools, there are 57 percent more crashes and 25 percent more injuries per mile on streets near schools than on the city’s other streets. This disparity largely disappears on days when schools are closed.” **Despite this overwhelming statistic, less than 40 schools currently have school streets, and even fewer are operational. In a city of almost 2,000 schools, this project asked: why is this the case?**

As I think about this work, I want to tell you about the story of PS 35 in Hollis, Queens. Before I worked at OpenPlans, I worked for StreetLab helping with community engagement around DOT’s Priority A locations for Open Streets: open streets in neighborhoods of color that were hit hard by COVID and lack open space. One new open street, at the intersection of 191st and 90th, near Jamaica Avenue, was adjacent to an elementary school that didn’t have access to a substantial playground. If you’re not familiar with Hollis, it’s a pretty residential, semi-suburban, car-heavy area of Eastern Queens, and PS 35 mostly serves Black, South Asian, and Indo-Caribbean students. Even though it rained and coordinating barricades was a logistical nightmare, it was a very successful open street: teachers had some time off from instruction while we provided temporary programmatic support, kids ran in the street and played soccer (continued...)

Summary continued

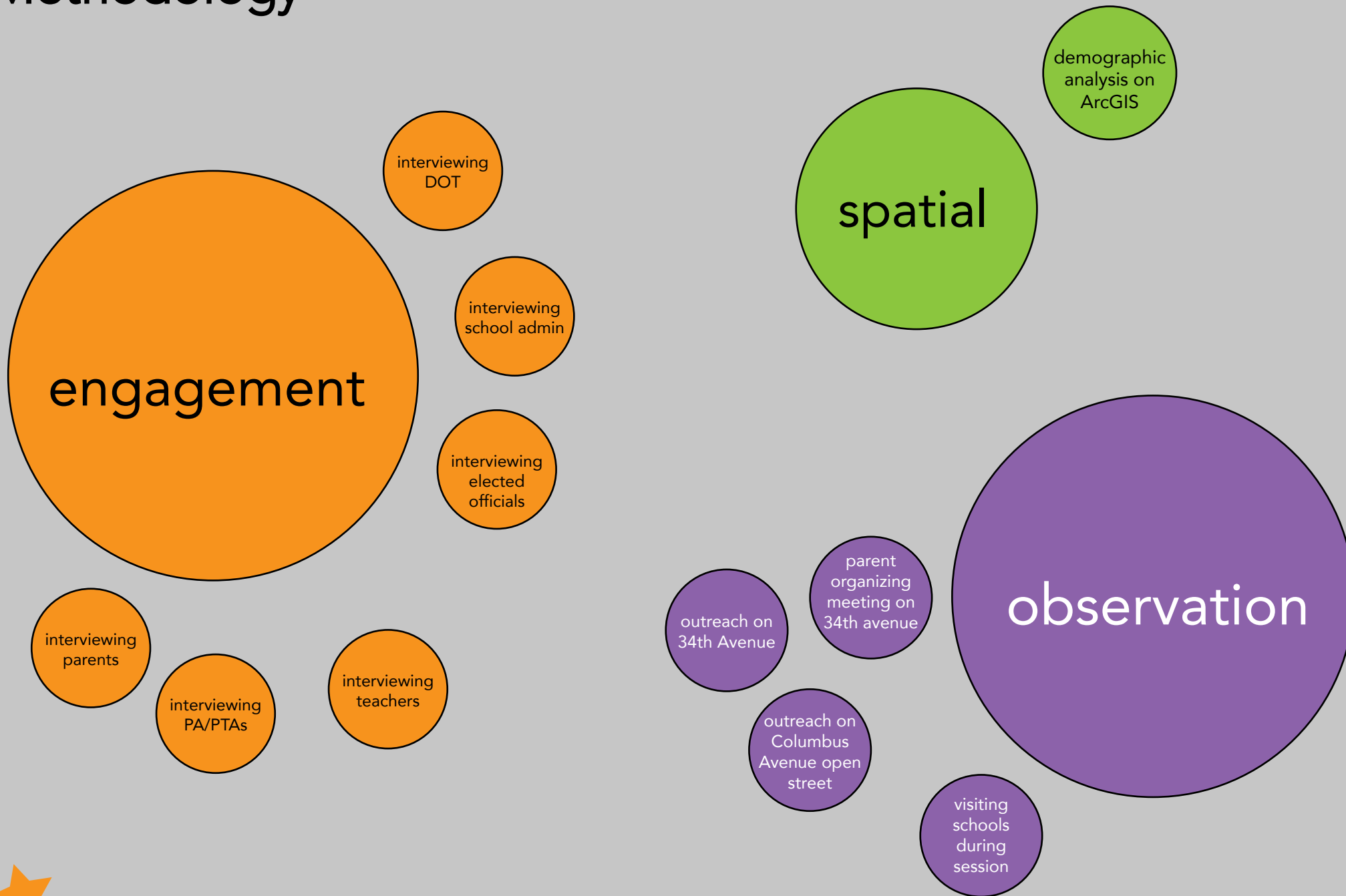
had ample open space to socially distance, wrote with chalk, drew, and took up the streets. The administration, the vice principal, principal, teachers, parent coordinators, were so happy about this new resource, and asked us to come back. We did! After the installation, we tried to get PS 35 to apply for a permanent open street near their school, but they never did. Why not? Was the application too difficult for an already overburdened school? Did they not have enough resources to confidently program the street without help of external nonprofits? Or, were the benefits of school streets unclear?

I thought about PS 35 a lot this summer while I worked on this project- and even tried to get in touch with them to find out more and try to help them apply - and as I think about this research and the work we're doing here, I'm putting schools like PS 35 at the forefront: **how do we get schools to feel confident applying, even if some schools find the application less overwhelming or have a parent that works for the city who can help them apply?** How do we make all schools realize the benefits of open streets, even if some schools are near Vanderbilt, for example, and are familiar with the benefits? How do we resource all schools to not worry about covering the costs of additional staff or coordinating barricades and signs, even if some schools have a robust PTA that can cover the costs?



An open street activation at PS 35 in Hollis during October 2021.

Methodology



Methodology

This project took three different methodological approaches: spatial analysis, community engagement, and participant observation.

I started with **spatial analysis**, making a map of every school street on the DOT website (note: data last updated in June). I did some basic demographic analysis on ArcGIS of every school street using ACS data on the community district level (note: community districts are a fairly large aggregation unit so there's a lot of room for error, oversimplification, and the modifiable areal unit problem happening there) to understand the racial and income breakdowns of neighborhoods that have school streets. I also started to create a multi-criteria decision analysis to determine which neighborhoods should get an open street - based on indexes like open space - but did not have time to finish that.

I then moved to collecting and analyzing observational data, creating a research protocol for observing school streets and then visiting as many as I could before school went out of session. **I also observed the process of PS 92 parents advocating for new open space near their school**, and how parents can best organize their administration and the city to create better futures for their kids. Finally, I stopped by some open streets in Jackson Heights and Manhattan to ask community members questions about school streets. I asked:

Do you know what a school street is? Does your school have one? What open space resources does your school need? How might you use an open street?

Finally, and for the bulk of my work, **I interviewed as many schools that participated in the program as possible**. I interviewed parents, PTA heads, parent coordinators, principals, vice principals, and teachers. I interviewed city council constituent service liaisons who helped schools get approved and had thoughtful suggestions about organizing strategies for open space work.

Note on terminology: the formal title of this program is open streets or open streets for schools. Despite that, the program is colloquially referred to a school streets, play streets, or closed streets, so I will use the terms interchangeably in this report.

Suggestions for Growth

For DOT and partner nonprofit organizations:

Create an easier application. Many schools found the application process easy, but many did not. Some ways to make the application easier might be:

Sharing a dummy template of a successful application so that schools have a greater understanding of what is needed from them.

Having a “schools only” application, rather than a broader open street application which schools complete.

Hosting info-sessions where school administration can fill out the application and submit during the same session

Removing the urban design / site plan component of the application, or providing specific guidance about how to complete the question.

Allowing schools to have their application carried over from year to year - i.e. if you get approved in 2020, you don't have to reapply at all in 2021.

Clarifying the extent to which schools have to interface with community boards to avoid schools worrying about negative community interactions and saving parents time.

More radically: not having an application, and allowing schools to opt-out of the process, rather than opting in. This involves an element of trust towards administrators and schools, which urban planners could benefit towards instilling.

Share a simple graphic with a timeline with schools: i.e. this is the SPECIFIC date where you have to apply by, once you apply, you'll present to community board within 30 days, you'll hear back in 90 days, you'll get a barricade in 91 days.

Clarify the process for acquiring barricades. While the DOT does supply barricades, some schools, like Peck Slip School, had the impression that it was up to individual schools to supply barriers. Their administration conveyed that they sourced beat up barricades from their local police precinct, which they took away for a street fair and never returned, and so they spent lots of time on the phone trying to get them back and they never got it returned. Schools do not have time for that.

Provide more official and permanent signage to provide the program with legitimacy.

Think of creative ways to provide schools with funding outside of the PTA model, to avoid reinforcing broken structures of inequality.

Suggestions for Growth

For public space organizers and practitioners:

Find ways to help compensate or minimize volunteer parental labor, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

Navigate pushback from neighbors with schools, one of the biggest issues we have to tackle right now if we want more robust open streets!

Host play streets town halls with principles and local elected officials.

Create a tactical urbanism toolkit that shows different ways that schools can use school streets.

Create an easily accessible map of nonprofits in the area that can provide funding and programmatic support to school streets.

Create a cohesive organizing strategy around schools that partners with Council members. Each council member should reach out to every school in their district (that's between 30 and 40, which is pretty reasonable) and pitch them on school streets. This worked for Council Member Restler in Brooklyn and helped Brooklyn Prospect International was able to get a school street- according to the admin at BK Prospect International.

For parents trying to organize:

If you're interested in having a school street in your school, start by hosting a town-hall type meeting in English, Spanish, and other languages that your school uses.

Make sure to bring food and coffee to the meeting.

Loop in your school administration and PTA as soon as possible.

Send letters to neighbors on your block telling them about the program and what to expect in the coming year (thanks, PS 34!)

Reach out to your former PTA president and people that are connected to your neighborhood to see "how do you drum up support for this" outside of the school community (thanks, PS 222!)

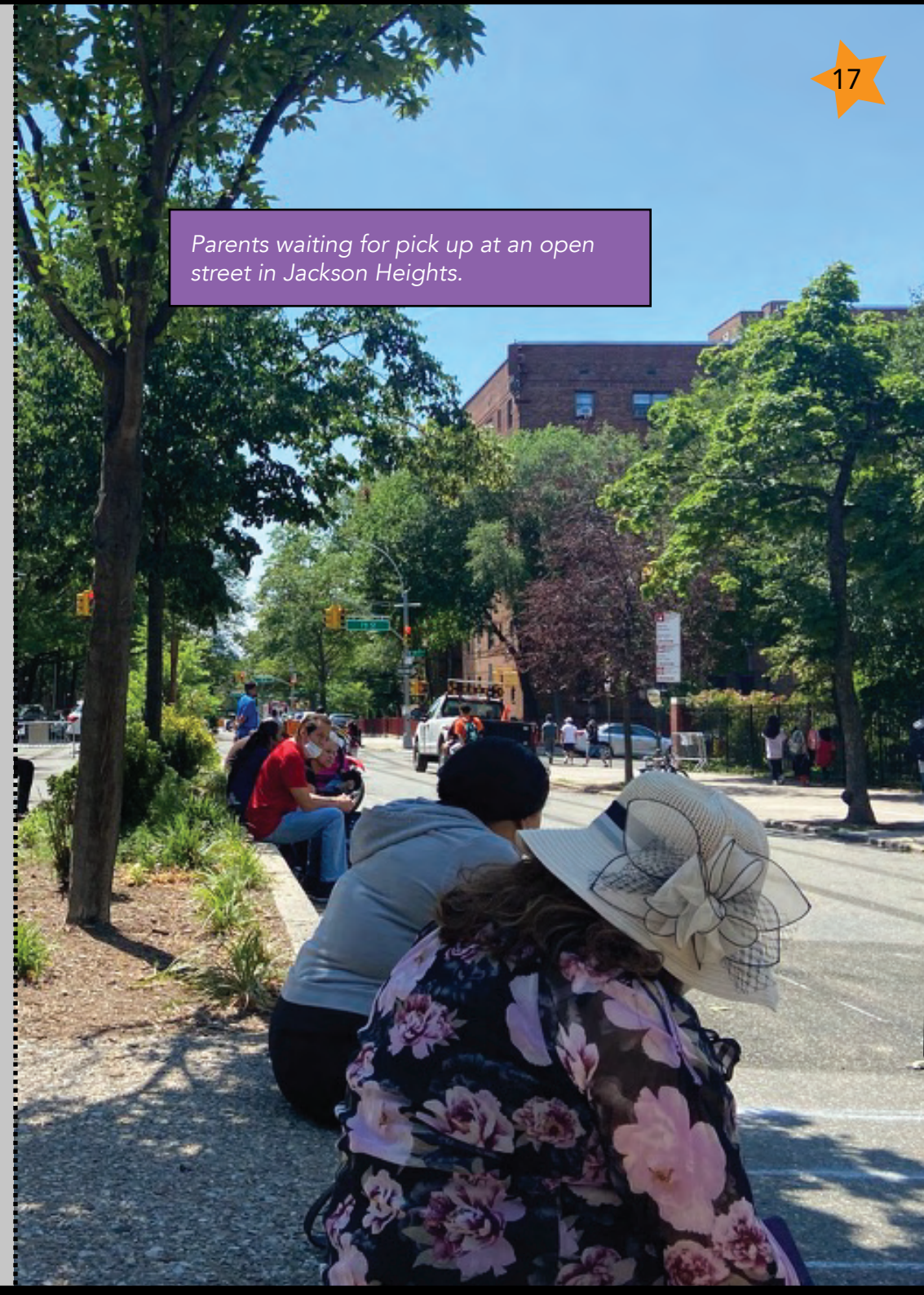
Frame school streets as wraparound services or community schools - area where there are least conflicts, most cooperation, most benefit to broader community.

Method 1: Engagement

A key component in this research was talking directly to stakeholders involved in school streets and asking: **what do you love about this program? What resources do you need to make this program as useful to you as possible? What did you think about the application process? Do you have a story that you love about how your students used the open street?**

I talked to Peck Slip School in Manhattan, who closes off their open street in the morning and opens it around 3 o'clock. They currently use it for pick up and drop off, but there's a massive construction project across the street, there's ongoing brownfield cleanup, a new development, and toxic organic mercury, so they're going to use the open street for a playspace in the fall. They're nervous about cars driving on the street, so they sometimes park their cars at the end of the open street as an additional barricade— **what are ways that organizers and practitioners can help assuage these fears, for both parents and administrators?**

I talked to PS 42, who primarily uses their school for pick up and drop off as well, and had the **unexpected benefit of socialization and community building between parents and teachers who were able to chat about their kids in an informal way at pickup**, especially with parents who might not have time and resources for parent teacher conferences.



Brooklyn Prospect

Brooklyn Prospect International Elementary School is a private elementary school in Downtown Brooklyn, near the Willoughby Open Street and Jay Street-Metro Tech train station. Brooklyn Prospect was a unique case because during recess, kids previously played at a play space auxiliary to the Metrotech space. Despite this, the intersection at Willoughby and Bridge is incredibly dangerous: there are about 8 buses that come in the morning and 870 kids that need to be shuttled, but there wasn't an assigned or consistent crossing guard to help the process. In addition, the school would use Metrotech Plaza or the plaza near NYU Tandon for recess before receiving a school street. Because it's a public plaza, school staff would put up cones and warn people "there are about to be 100 screaming kids for the next 30 minutes." This led to difficult situations, like commentary from passersby, people trying to film children, or hard conversations with neighboring buildings about the use of chalk. Now, Brooklyn Prospect uses their play street for recess, not pick up or drop off. They're in the process of building a rooftop playground, so this play street is an "interim fix" prior to that. Resources wise, staff members bring chalk, jumprope, a ball, and rings and cones for coin toss. There hasn't been a need for additional staff because the recess plan has always been on the street.

Brooklyn Prospect International Elementary School was able to materialize a play street because: Brooklyn Prospect is colocated with another school and was able to collaborate with this other school in their network.

Additionally, a parent at Brooklyn Prospect worked at the Department of Transportation (DOT) and helped with the application. During the application process, Council Member Lincoln Restler visited, and then followed up with the DOT to escalate or bump the application process. During the visit, Brooklyn Prospect spoke with Council Member Restler about shootings in the neighborhood, traffic buildups in the morning, crossing guards, and parental concerns about play, and were able to discuss the existing school streets application. Schools should feel encouraged to reach out to Council Members and local representatives who may already have existing relationships with the DOT. Alternatively, local representatives should use school visits in order to share information about the benefits of open streets for schools. Despite that, administration found it unclear during the application process what the process should have been in terms of timeline or expectations. Increased transparency from the DOT, including an application with best practices or a timeline could make the process easier for schools.

"The school street helps our kids feel connectedness to the neighborhood around us and the community we're in." Local organizers hosted a march for children's rights, and made sure to end the march where students play: their students felt part of the city which was powerful and positive for their growth.

PS34 is a public school in Greenpoint located on a block of mostly multifamily residences and near a local public library. PS34 found out about the school through the Department of Education: a DOE staffer reached out to the school through DOE's partnership with advocacy organization Open School Alliance.

The administration filed for an open street to close off the street for safety reasons and social distancing reasons, rather than for play. While it required a significant amount of time, they appreciated being able to reuse the same form for future applications. **We suggest: the DOT carrying applications through between years, rather than having schools reapply between years.**

PS34's school street is primarily for pick up and drop off. Their school street has made pick up and drop off easier, particularly during COVID spikes because parents needed to drop kids off further away from the school (at the gate, rather than the door). This adjustment meant that parents needed to wait outside until PS34 was able to open the gates and receive families, especially as the school's infrastructure has narrow sidewalks around the building. This new school street provides a safe walking area for children to be picked up and run around in the morning. In terms of resources, PS34 needs more staff to help monitor the street.

The street cannot be left unattended with a barrier there, not just to ensure cars don't pass, but in case emergency vehicles need to pass through or clear. Implementation of the school street has required restaffing, budget realignment, and additional personnel reassigned for the time that it's closed.

Parents initially helped out with the open street application. In early 2020, parents wanted to expand the open street to have kids playing during the school street. This was too difficult because it required additional staffing that the school didn't have, and the school already had two yards for outdoor learning. Instead, the school piloted a green outdoor team with parents to experiment with models of outdoor learning.

Having good relations with neighbors has been difficult and important. Despite that, there was significant community pushback that PS 34 navigated throughout the process. When it was proposed for students to do instruction on the street, parents were concerned about safety, the neighborhood, and lack of officers monitoring the street. Community members who live on the street tended to be supportive. **One suggestion the school brought was: sending letters to every neighbor on the block letting them know how it would be used in advance. Because of the letter, even those who were initially unsupportive of the open street were not big objectors.**

I met with PS 42, a public school that serves mostly Asian-American students in Lower Manhattan, and spoke with Principal May Lee and their Parent Coordinator. PS 42's administration requested an open street for help during pick up, dismissal, and drop off. As construction occurs during the fall, they are trying to expand the open street for playspace, despite nearby scaffolding and construction. Currently, PS 42 takes one side of the street, and the other side of the street belongs to a laundromat and expensive clothing store that doesn't open until noon. PS 42 has had a difficult time with the open street, and has found not all vehicles honor open streets, and have witnessed cars going down barricades during operational hours.

PS 42 found the application process difficult, "unclear," and "confusing," initially completing the wrong app and finding the site plan question particularly difficult. Despite this difficulty, PS 42 loves the open street: it has prevented cars from racing down the street and provide space for kids.

Most excitingly, the open street has built relationship between parents and teachers. Dismissal occurs at 2:40, and parents arrive to pick up their children at 2:30, these 10 minutes gave space and time for parents to talk to each other, socialize, and talk to teachers - before having access to this space, parents would quickly find their children and leave.

This has both ensured that parents are able to follow safe social distancing protocol (which would be difficult if this were occurring only on a sidewalk) and built community.

Resources wise, this has been difficult for PS 42: there need to be two supervisors at the barricades (one on each side), but crossing guards don't work lunch hours. Safety is a big concern, and the school does not have the budget for extra aids to monitor the signs. **Signage wise, the school uses laminated signs that are made in the school, but would prefer if the DOT was able to provide bright orange, lightweight barricades, and more official signage to palace on lampposts.**

I spoke to administrators from PS 146, a magnet school in Park Slope, who close off their adjacent street from 7:30 am to 3 pm. PS 146 found out about the program because a parent at the school works for the DOT and pointed them towards the program. The administrators needed extra space to be safe during the height of the program, so they searched the open street program online to see if they were eligible for the program.

The administrators found the application process to not be overly difficult, but also not straightforward. In particular, the administrators found that the application was geared towards commercial strips (like Vanderbilt Avenue). **We recommend: creating an application or permitting system geared towards schools specifically.**

PS 146 uses their school street all day long, from arrival to dismissal. They have worked the open street into the curriculum, integrating dance, movement, research, and lunch. During early spikes of the COVID-19 pandemic, class periods had to be dispersed because of the amount of people on the street, and the open street allowed for a lot of space to work with. Amy noted that normally dismissal for school was in the cafeteria, and was “mayhem” because PS 146 is a school of 600 kids. An open street allowed for more movement, freedom, and space. PS 146 also hosts outdoor classes for academic reasons, not just recreational. Finally, PS 146 hosts a biking program, where a formal principal teaches bike riding to students who don’t have bikes or can’t ride.

Resource wise, PS 146 received additional funding because of COVID, so they were able to hire new sub-teachers, paraprofessionals, and additional support to have adults where needed. PS 146 leaves barricades up during the day because they are very heavy, and leans on parental support. During the first year of the program, PS 146 had parent volunteers come out to the barricades as much as possible. Invariably, the city would come to inspect when there was no parent at the barricades, so PS 146 would get written up. After the second year of the program, the DOT stopped inspecting barricades (and potentially lessened requirements around adults at barricades), so PS 146 stopped sending parents out there. Both administrators underscored the importance of working directly with neighbors, and being on good terms. At the end of the year, this productive relationship was rewarded, the school wanted to have graduation at 6 pm and while the neighbors could have said no, the great relationship allowed for neighbor presence.

I also spoke with Kiki, a parent at PS 146, who shared the vast diversity of street usages. PS 146 is creative with programming, hosting “June Share,” where students share projects they worked on during the school year and display them outside, presenting them to their school. Kiki encouraged schools who are interested in communicating to their neighbors about school streets to use media to spread the word about the program, like pitching stories and op-eds to PATCH and Next Door.

In my opinion, PS 222 and the strip of schools on 34th Avenue are a true open streets success story, full of ample play space and programming. PS 222's open street is used for playtime and recess, and requires no additional support staff.

I spoke to Noelia Pacheco, the president of the PTA at the time, who described the process of getting an open street as "team effort." When the playground was shut down due to construction, Noelia looked up the application process online and spoke to supportive parents. In parallel to advocating to the DOT, the Principal submitted a form to the local precinct and prepared to speak to the local Community Board (CB2).

Noelia underscored the need to work closely with administration, she noted that their school's principal, Principal Marrero, was happy to collaborate on the initiative and supportive from the beginning of the process.

While the application wasn't overly onerous, the first form that PS 222 filled out was incorrect, and so they needed to reach out to the DOT for guidance. PS 222 assumed that they had to present to CB2 for approval, but did not end up speaking. In preparation for this, Noelia prepared parents with talking points to speak at the community board.

Noelia had tangible advice for other schools trying to organize their communities to support a school street. Firstly, this requires talking to parents and letting them know that they need support. Noelia announced it at a PTA meeting. **PS 222's PTA was intentional about bilingual organizing: holding PTA meetings and sending out communications in English and Spanish.**

In addition, the PTA was proactive about garnering neighborhood support, reaching out to former PTA presidents, the SLT, local open streets organizers, and people connected in the neighborhood to ask "how do we drum up support for this?"

Peck Slip School

I spoke to administrators at the Peck Slip School, an elementary school in Lower Manhattan who closes off their open street in the morning (before school) and opens it for cars at 3 pm. Their open street is a narrow cobblestone street between Pearl and Water, and primarily used for arrival, dismissal, and recess. Infrastructurally, it was formerly a 1-way street that didn't get a ton of car usage. Peck Slip has a small playspace on the roof, so it was initially instrumental in making sure arrival and dismissal are safe for students, and easing scheduling of recess. **Peck Slip School has also used the open street to host events outside, they've hosted an annual Halloween march and the chorus sings Halloween-themed songs outside for families.**

Peck Slip School provides a unique case: across the street from the school is a Brownfield Opportunity Act, leading to a massive construction project, cleanup, and toxic organic mercury, so there is real earned sensitivity about potential environmental hazards from playing in the street. There has been conflict with the Mayor's office and developers, so Peck Slip School will not have access to their playspace in the fall.

Instead of just an open street, administrators would love for streets to be remapped and for people in the neighborhood to be able to gather.

Peck Slip School applied for an open street in 2015, and found the process incredibly difficult and "old school." Now, the process is much easier and streamlined. Peck Slip School has found difficulty with barriers: they got "super beat up" barriers to use when they first became part of the program, but the local police precinct took the blue barriers for a street fair. Peck Slip School called the precinct repeatedly for their barriers back and they were never returned. When speaking more about the barriers, it was the school's impression that it was their job to supply barriers. **We suggest that the DOT proactively reach out to schools that are accepted into the program and provide barriers, rather than waiting for schools to reach out.**

Peck Slip School has also found challenges with parking and lack of DOT enforcement. In terms of support staff, custodial staff helps to set up the barricades in the morning and clean garbage on the street. Despite this staffing, people still park on the street in the morning which makes leftover cars difficult for recess. In addition, people don't respect the open street and move the gates to park sooner than 3 pm. Parents and teachers at Peck Slip School are nervous about exposing their students to open streets after someone recently drove a truck on a bike path on the Upper West Side during school dismissal on Halloween. In response, a parent who worked at the city's Office of Emergency Management suggested parking staff cars on the end of each side of the open street.

Council Member Restler

After meeting with Brooklyn Prospect International and hearing about how Council Members can be instrumental in securing an open street for schools, I met with a staffer for Council Member Restler to discuss the process, and also how schools can be intentional about their engagement models. In Downtown Brooklyn, the primary concern was room for playspace and fresh air and mayhem at pick up and drop off hours. In addition, the block leading up to Metrotech had residential buildings with dangerous parking entrances.

The staffer noted that the interaction with the Department of Transportation about Brooklyn Prospect International's open street was only a few emails, but the relationship with the school began because the Council Member made it a priority for community advocate staffers to visit every public and charter school in the district, to help understand their needs and build out a priority list. **This is a sustainable engagement model for schools - there are around 40 to 50 schools in each Council District. CMs should visit open space institutions and show community members that play streets are a net good, through, in part, posting on social media.**

CM Restler's staffer suggested that the DOT should engage in more standardized formal correspondence (outreach, emails) with schools. Local government can also better engage schools through creating media (like videos, pictures of kids enjoying the play street) and making the case that play streets are well run, useful, and needed. **In addition, each Council Member should help build neighbor support by hosting play streets town halls with principals: more Council Members can do significant engagement around open streets.**



Method 2: Observation

I started observation by looking at how school streets work in practice. There were a lot of questions that I wanted to understand, like how does the school use the space and which spaces do they use? Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street? Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street? What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)? Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?) Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)? Is there potential for conflict on the street? I created an observational protocol so that I could ask and answer the same questions at every site. **There are of course massive limitations to this method: there are many cases where schools did not have barricades, did not have barricades inside, could have an early dismissal, could be off that day for parent teacher conferences that weren't published online, especially because this is the end of the year, there's a lot of room for error in these methods.** In particular, I visited a strip of private schools on the Upper East Side, which is a big constituency of beneficiaries of the program, and most of the schools were not using their school streets (i.e. no barricade, barricade on the side of the street) or they were completely empty at pick up (i.e. a barricade and paid additional security guard staff, but no students walking or playing on it). But, I learned, towards the end of the year, private schools have unusual and variable pick up times that don't always correspond with the DOE calendar, their websites.



Observation Checklist

<i>Logistical questions</i>			
Name of school:		Address:	
Date of visit:	Time of visit:	Length of visit:	Weather:
<i>Street typologies</i>			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?			
Is there parking allowed on the street?			
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?			
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?			
<i>Traffic and street safety</i>			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?			
How many cars pass?			
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?			
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?			
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?			
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?			
How many kids are walking home?			
<i>Programmatic</i>			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?			

How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	
Does any programming occur on the street?	
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	
<i>Quality of life and neighborhood character</i>	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	
Air quality?	
<i>Street typology (beyond-observations)</i>	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

I used this same checklist at every school that I visited or stopped by to try to provide consistency between locations. Despite that, I found that some of my questions were repetitive or hard to answer in practice (i.e. air quality).

No barricades on the street
 Kids playing in the school yard
 Teachers are watching the kids
 The barricades are hidden

SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Logistical questions			
Name of school:	PS 34	Address:	Greenpoint
Date of visit:	6/24	Time of visit:	2
Length of visit:		Weather:	Sunny
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?	Extreme car No school/st in use		
Is there parking allowed on the street?	Yes extreme		
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?	No school/street operational		
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?	They dont		
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?	N/A		
How many cars pass?	Many		
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?	Yes		
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?			
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?			
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?			
How many kids are walking home?			
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?			

How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	There are barricades hidden inside dayground
Does any programming occur on the street?	NO
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	literally nothing
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

I visited PS 34 and found no operational school street, except two barricades hidden in a school yard. Despite that, based on my interview with administration, I likely visited on a half day.

Sabina Sethi Umri / Open Plans / School Streets

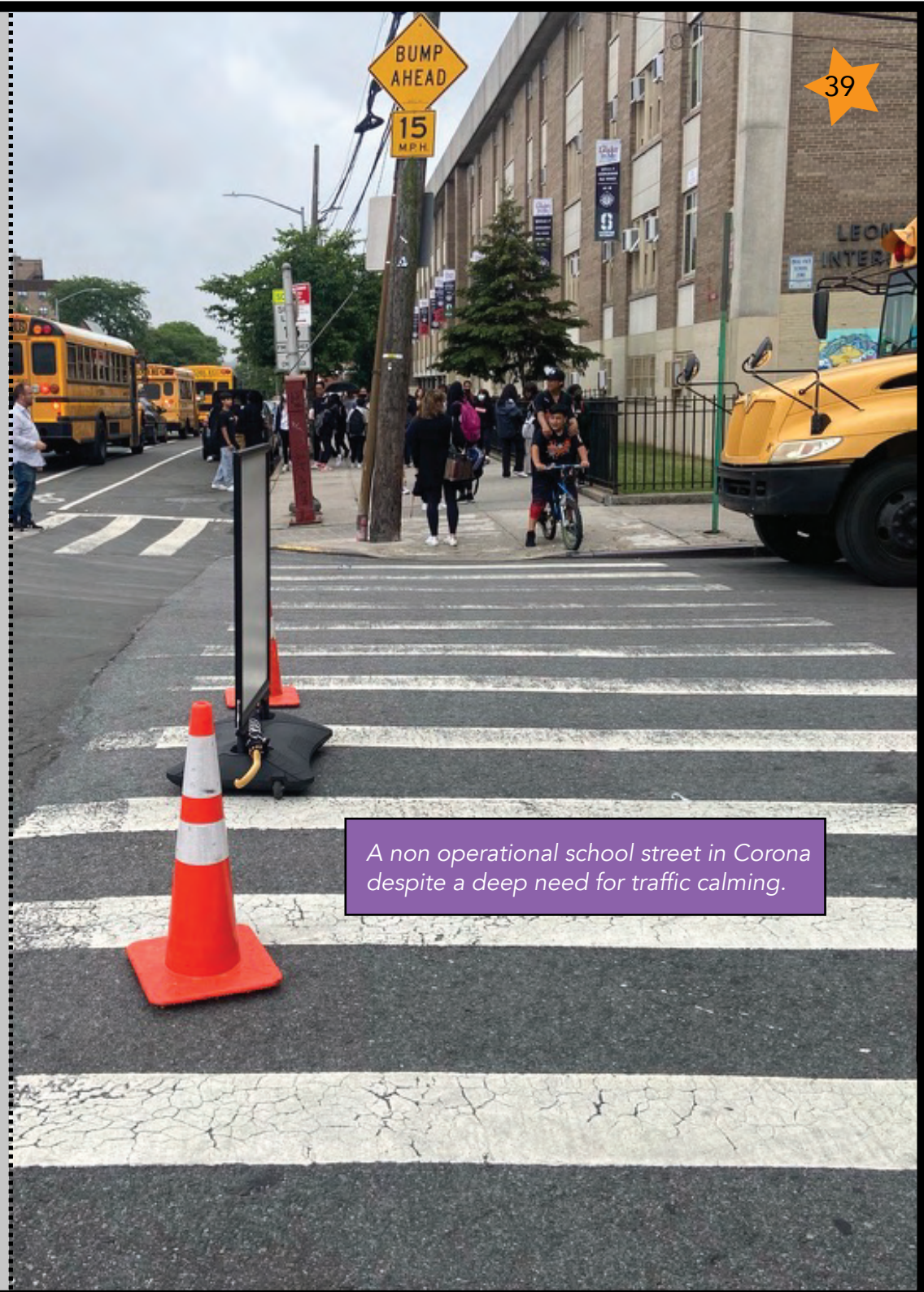
SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Logistical questions			
Name of school:	PS 13Q	Address:	Corona
Date of visit:	6/22	Time of visit:	7:00 / 7:15
Length of visit:		Weather:	Rainy
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?	Residential Not at all		
Is there parking allowed on the street?	Yes		
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?	for nothing		
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?	not at all		
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?			
How many cars pass?			
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?			
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?			
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?			
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?			
How many kids are walking home?			
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?			

lots of school buses
chinese speaking crossing guard

Basement to side
under
construction

lots of
parking
a lot of
one way
anytime

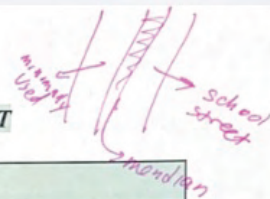


A non operational school street in Corona despite a deep need for traffic calming.

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SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

a driveway to kids or a walkway



Logistical questions			
Name of school:	PS398	Address:	
Date of visit:	6/14	Time of visit:	3
Length of visit:		Weather:	warm, windy
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?	34th open		
Is there parking allowed on the street?	Yes, minimal, parkings for across street		
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?	Neighbors but mostly students / parents		
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?	half of meridian		
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?	none		
How many cars pass?	none		
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?	none		
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?	none		
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?	Yes pick up		
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?			
How many kids are walking home?	none w/o parent		
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?	2+ zing coordinators 10+ parents yes		

both on other side so scary

How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	3 on either side of meridian, lots of barricades
Does any programming occur on the street?	Yes! zing, dancing and music work and music w/ kids
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	streamers on meridian
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	PLAY
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	and big highways
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	construction noise (music) / loud music
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	Yes, strollers, tons of strollers
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

extreme chalking

muala - 50+ kids playing

PS 398 is extremely intentionally programmed, and I stopped by while there was afterschool programming for young children while parents watched and socialized on the meridian.

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SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

organized parents/teachers to activate block - b/w 83/82 - letter of supp for full plaza block

acc. Henry mid block - thought there would be plaza block

on 34th b/w 82nd + 83rd

plaza block as part of parent redesign (is hard block) → 1 year from now

Logistical questions			
Name of school: PS 212		Address:	
Date of visit: 1:45	Time of visit:	Length of visit:	Weather:
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?		<i>open street adjacent (mid block)</i>	
Is there parking allowed on the street?		YES	
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?			
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?		N/A	
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?			
How many cars pass?		MANY	
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?			
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?			
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?			
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?			
How many kids are walking home?			
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?			

How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	
Does any programming occur on the street?	
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

Bengali English

Sharmin + crossing guard + loves street

only 34th are that they have Friday open st.

PS 212 is near a school street, but does not technically have one. So, they close off the street in front of the school routinely on special Fridays. I spoke to the crossing guard, Sharmin, who loves the open street and told me that when the school is closed to cars, it's not additional work for her.

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parked car @ each end (2 is work things)

*wave delimitation
More plaza reason is happening*

SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Logistical questions			
Name of school: IS145		Address:	
Date of visit: 6/75	Time of visit: 2	Length of visit:	Weather:
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?		34th	
Is there parking allowed on the street?		NO (2 cars)	
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?		Not used by school tons of parents w/ strollers (!) jogging, friends talking	
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?		Don't use it a lot to hang open st. coalition does programming	
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?		NO	
How many cars pass?		0	
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?		NO	
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?		NO	
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?		ma YES pickup	
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?		ma. bad walking road to school	
How many kids are walking home?		150-200	
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?		None! no adults! It's a middle school	

*4/6 street vendor (ice cream, snacks, flowers) - scooter
- 1st block get less attention - delimitation*

kid biking downy trucks

kids playing soccer rough housing

re plays truck corner

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2 to side

How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	<i>on one either side of median (2 to side)</i>
Does any programming occur on the street?	<i>no - vendors</i>
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	<i>no, more for plaza construction</i>
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	<i>Adult hangout</i>
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	<i>Yes, loud car noise</i>
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	<i>Yes! scooter, e bike, granny bike, stroller</i>
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

neighborhood loading zones @ intersection -> better way to use curbside space

tons of kids / parents walking

Everyone walking home in groups, self sufficiency

kid biking home -> one or two parents but mostly self sufficiency

2:20

kids walking out of school all on open street - 200 brown kids

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SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

incredibly well programmed

Logistical questions			
Name of school:	15230	Address:	
Date of visit:	11/15	Time of visit:	:40
Length of visit:		Weather:	WARM
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?			
Is there parking allowed on the street?	Yes, one side		
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?	neighbors, biking walking		
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?	YES both streets		
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?	No traffic		
How many cars pass?	None		
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?	No		
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?	None		
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?	YES! throughway for pickup		
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?	Walking, kids scooters, stroller		
How many kids are walking home?	20-30		
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?	Yes, two a day w/ orange vests (Verona)		

parents walking small kids home

talked Muna

Kids chasing bubbles

dad jumping rope

hula hooping w/ kid

SO PROGRAMMED by external group, gmas picking up kids, more dears, dad hula hooping

this age is small 50 parents walking kids

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VERONA (34th ave open street coalition - Jim Nisla)

How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	2 barricades one side 2 barricades other side
Does any programming occur on the street?	bubbles, hula hooping, jump rope, chalk
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	Yes! 5 stoops! Blue boxes for chairs and tables seats w/ stoops (5 stoops)
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	Hangout spot, kids sitting kids hula hooping, kids skipping rope
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	children, pretty quiet
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	YES! cyclists ebikes
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

lots of concrete seating

more concrete seating

verona, talked about open st. Muna The-Fin ZING Muna school streets already unsuccessful → why have school streets been successful - they've been notably unsuccessful - you're insane, it's PR OG RAMMING not the spao

Food pantry
children are having fun

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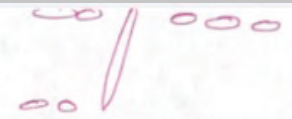
SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Logistical questions			
Name of school:	PS149 / Christina McAuliffe	Address:	Jackson Heights / 34th
Date of visit:	6/15	Time of visit:	1 PM
Length of visit:		Weather:	warm + lovely
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?	- 34th ave - 26 blocks of open st - community health clinic + Covid testing 2 blocks over (in the open street) (in Spanish, older people)		
Is there parking allowed on the street?	Yes, but no cars. Two streets, Green meridian, Car on left side		
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?	Mostly neighbors! 6/8 tables and 20 chairs. 4 tables full! Adults taking a call, someone getting lunch, globe, guy walking dog, friends		
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?	School is using the green meridian for decoration		
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?	No cars!		
How many cars pass?	None		
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?	Minimal, some idling		
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?	Idling from Eder @ the intersection		
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?			
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?			
How many kids are walking home?			
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?	No adults on street at all, but not used by kids		

NO kids in sight

windblown drawings by kids at school, streamer p (ants, colors) + tabs + chairs
a jogger cyclist estroter tons of walking street leads a dimension dog walking

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How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	5 on one end (3 on one side of road, 2 on other) and 2 on other (all one side)
Does any programming occur on the street?	Tables and chairs, public children's art
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	Tables and chairs (6/8) (~20) colorful metal
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	Hangout spot for adults
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	Residential
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	lots of deliveries / cyclists - but there is a bike lane, people are respectful of it
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	Yes, noise of children (but from inside buildings)
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	Yes! Scooter, a bike, motorcycle, granny cart
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

→ cones planter (big) @ edge

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SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

NO OPEN STREET

Logistical questions			
Name of school: PS 19		Address: Corona	
Date of visit: 6/22	Time of visit: 2:30	Length of visit:	Weather: Rainy
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?		Adjacent = parking, extreme traffic (100) of uniformed kids walking home from school	
Is there parking allowed on the street?		YES!	
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?		Just for cars and traffic and street vendors	
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?		They don't	
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?		Extreme traffic	
How many cars pass?		100's	
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?		Through traffic	
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?		Temble, super crowded and dangerous	
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?		YES! Lot of pick up	
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?		Walking alone, w/parents bike, scooter	
How many kids are walking home?		Literally 100's on the sidewalk	
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?		Crossing guard	

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How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	NONE - / see 2 barricades inside the school
Does any programming occur on the street?	NO: school offers adult learning / art opportunities
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	NO
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	Pick up / leave / waiting
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	Mixed use commercial and residential
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	Yes! Traffic, ROOSEVELT AVE
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	Traffic
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	Yes, but on sidewalk
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

asked crossing guard about school st. and she was confused

and not intercommed to any other school street

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SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Nov 1/15 used typology of school street

Adjacent street vendor - asked on emp. on side or there are there that are close off to cars or traffic (in Spanish) - she replied ca (so in Spanish) - No, there's traffic everywhere! We both laughed, they brought a \$1 empanada.

Logistical questions			
Name of school: 1561		Address: corona	
Date of visit: 8/22	Time of visit: 3	Length of visit:	Weather: raining
Street typologies			
How are the adjacent streets being used? How is the school street being used?		school street - 1 way for cars and school buses	
Is there parking allowed on the street?		Yes, both sides	
Is the school street solely for the school or do the neighbors use the school street?		school - It's just used to optimize traffic	
How does the school use the space and which spaces do they use?		One way for cars - partially closed off for pickups	
Traffic and street safety			
How do school streets impact or lessen driving? Is there a lot of traffic?		Extreme traffic and congestion	
How many cars pass?		tons	
Is there buildup of traffic on the sides of the road? Is there through traffic on the street?		So dangerous to cross Aggressive behavior	
What kind of illegal or knockoff behavior is happening (double parking, u-turns, idling)?		Idly, aggressive	
Are the streets used for pick up and drop off?		pick up, small kids but no parents	
How are kids arriving - cars, walking, bike?		Just walking	
How many kids are walking home?		100's of middle schoolers	
Programmatic			
How many adults need to be on the street? Do adults need to stay on the street the whole time?		There are 5+ crossing guards, who are det. teachers / para professionals	

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How many barricades are on the street? How are the barricades placed?	2 that is on side and for buses to pass
Does any programming occur on the street?	NO
Are there any physical elements on the street besides barricades? (Planters?)	No
Do people pick up their kids and leave or is it a hangout spot? Are streets used for play?	No parents
Quality of life and neighborhood character	
What are the neighborhood characteristics (residential, industrial, commercial)?	Residential
Do you see potential for conflict on these streets? (I.e. types of traffic, large vehicles, things out of scale for a school space)	There is extreme congestion
Is the street noisy? How does it feel? (childrens, traffic, construction)	SO noisy
Do cyclists still access the streets? Micromobility (scooters, ebikes)	NO
Air quality?	
Street typology (beyond-observations)	
Any descriptive data about the school adjacent to the school street here:	
Any conversations had with people in the school street here:	

Asked 2 headen and they said it closed off partially to cars-only buses but they don't rly know because there are 5 entrances and this is only one side

Community Engagement

There were two types of more conventional broader community engagement that this project took.

Firstly, I visited a parent meeting on 34th avenue of parents trying to agitate for a school street outside of PS 92. This meeting was in Spanish (which I translated!) and English, and occurred because another intern, Henry, and a parent, Marta, gathered parents from outside of the school during drop off. The meeting was very successful because: the organizers brought donuts and coffee and sat on the meridian in front of a more well resourced open school street in walking distance. **The questions were very easily accessible and allowed participants to feel comfortable speaking and getting to know other organizers: are you from the neighborhood? How do you use the open street? What kinds of resources do you wish your school had?** After the meeting, the parents created a WhatsApp group and continued to organize.

In addition, I visited 34th Avenue again and the Columbus Open Street to ask passerbys how they would creatively use an open school street, if they knew what it was, and if their school already had one. The most exciting answers were around **stormwater management, creative science education, radical civic education programming, arts and theater education,** and kids who drew smiley faces on post it notes in lieu of answers.

Community engagement on 34th avenue with fellow interns Henry and Walker!



Method 3: Spatial

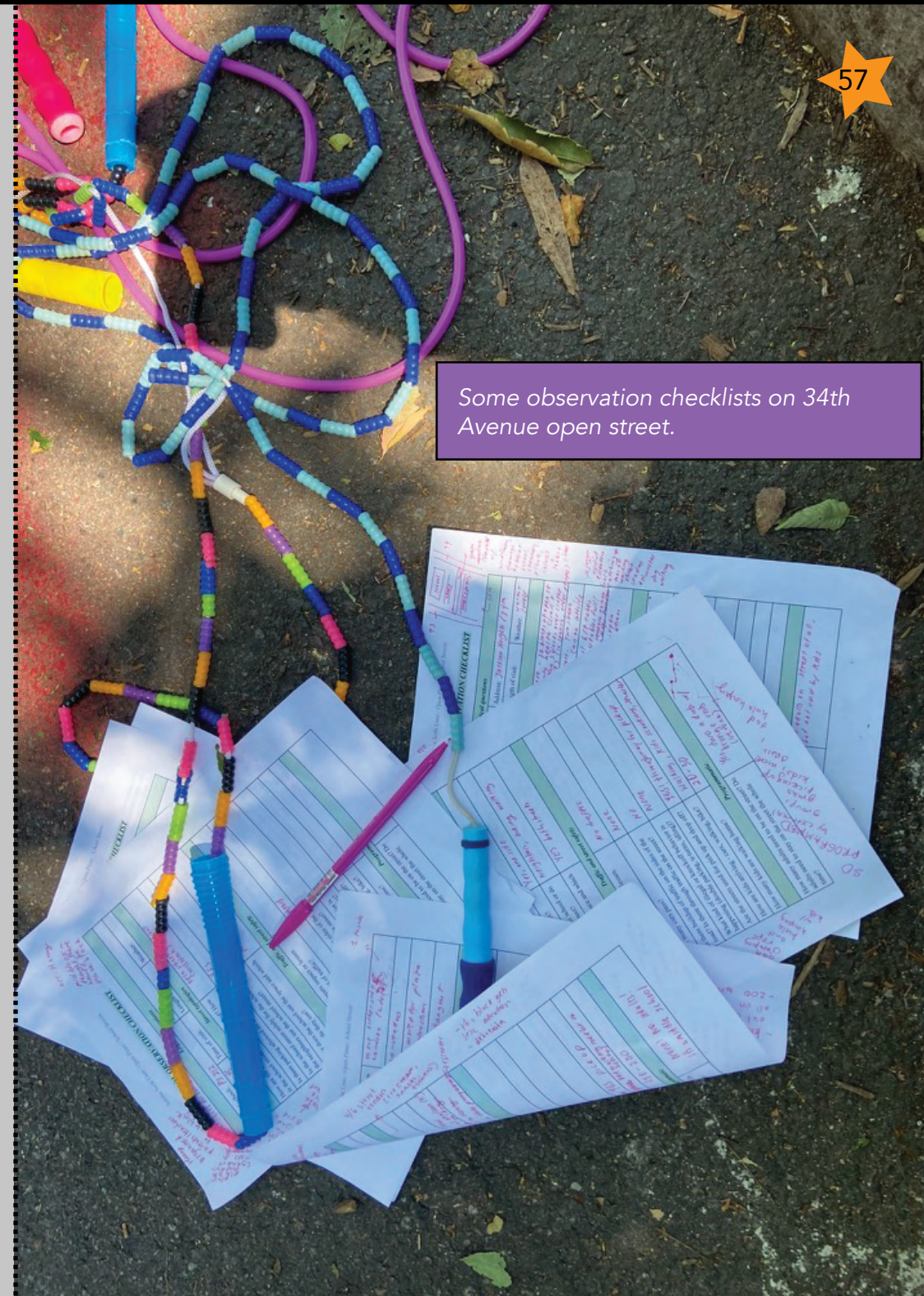
Initially going into the project, spatial analysis was a key component of the work in determining key demographic features of the program. Because there were so few school streets participating in the program (under 40), spatial analysis and drawing larger patterns becomes difficult and almost entirely extrapolating information. For example, I tried to do a racial breakdown and income breakdown for all of the schools participating in the program using ACS data on the community district level. But, this ignores that schools are not always community schools. This is particularly important in this sample set, where over half are charter or private schools. In future iterations of this research, it would be useful to track:

How do school streets change air pollution patterns and air quality?

How can schools navigate truck patterns and traffic flows?

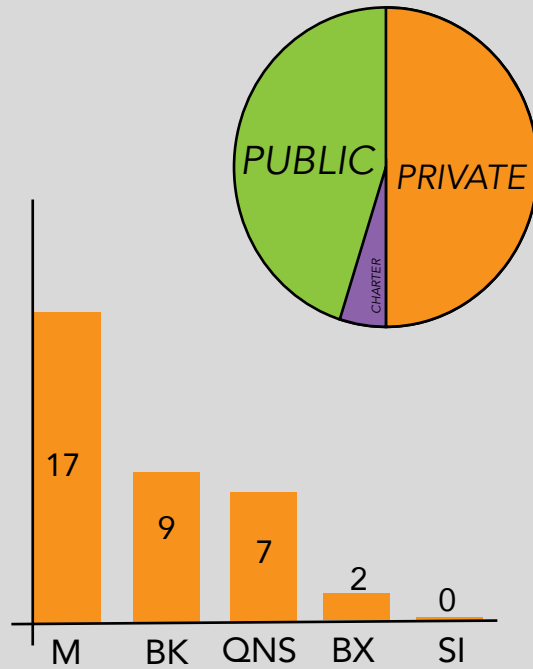
What are ways that school streets mitigate or change traffic patterns? What about traffic fatalities?

Where are locations in the city that SHOULD have access to school streets but don't? Is there room for creating a priority metric for areas that should have greater investment in outdoor school infrastructure?



Where are school streets?

Everyone deserves access to open playspace and safe drop off zones, but does everyone get it?



Almost 50% of school streets are in Manhattan.

There are two school streets in the Bronx.

25% of school streets are in Brooklyn.

There are 7 school streets in Queens.

There are no school streets in Staten Island.