

Putting 8th First

Why the Future of Eighth
Depends on Investment



Eighth Avenue: the Entrance to Our City

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global significance of Eighth Avenue between West 33rd Street and West 42nd Street cannot be overstated. It is where New York City begins for 1.1 million people every day. This critical corridor between Penn Station and Port Authority Bus Terminal hosts over 100,000 jobs and 3.5 million annual tourists. When employees and visitors arrive in New York, most step out onto Eighth Avenue. This space is their first impression, their benchmark, and their lasting memory of our city.

However, the deteriorated sidewalks and roads leading into Midtown from the nation's busiest transportation hubs put underinvestment on full display. Pedestrians are abandoned to navigate temporary walkways, confusing signage, potholes, uneven sidewalks, broken curbs, and unsightly scaffolding as they traverse the corridor. The result is a public realm in disarray that fails to match the corridor's economic importance, presents a barrier to residential development, and prohibits the most transit rich area in Manhattan from becoming a vibrant 24/7 community.

Though the corridor has been neglected for decades by previous administrations, there has never been a more important time for New York City to invest in Eighth Avenue's future. The recent MSMX rezoning has unlocked the Garment District's potential to play a major role in generating much-needed affordable housing, but the environment on and around Eighth Avenue is not conducive to residents. At the same time, \$19 billion in federal and regional investment is being poured into the redevelopment of the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Penn Station transportation hubs on either end of Eighth Avenue. This will create gleaming new anchors that will bring even more people to the corridor. They simply cannot be met by the current conditions. This moment presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the city that should not be squandered.

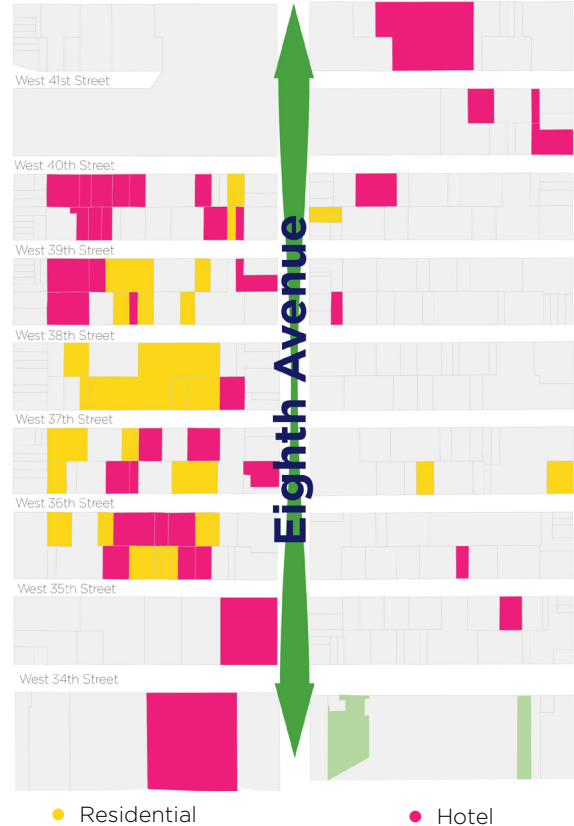
- » Capitalize on Adjacent Transit Investment – To capitalize on the unprecedented \$19 billion investment in the redevelopments of the Port Authority and Penn Station, we must improve the corridor that links these new landmarks on either end of Eighth Avenue.
- » Create a Fitting Entrance to New York – To encourage business and tourism, this entrance to New York must make a better impression, particularly once the new transit hubs come online.
- » Spur Residential Development – To encourage critical residential development in highly desired proximity to business and transit hubs, Eighth Avenue must become more conducive to a 24/7 population.
- » Improve Safety – To encourage the development of an active 24/7 community, Eighth Avenue must look and be safer.

By implementing strategic streetscape improvements, Eighth Avenue can transform into a corridor worthy of its global importance as a place for people to live, work, and visit.

JOBS



HOTELS AND RESIDENTIAL



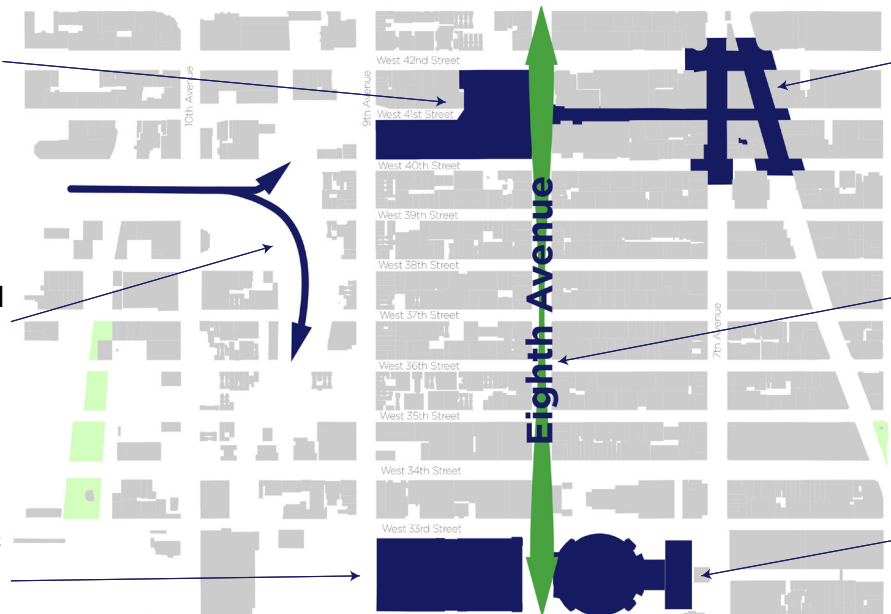
Data from MapPLUTO and NYC Industrial Data Explorer

DAILY RIDERSHIP FOR KEY TRANSIT HUBS ALONG EIGHTH AVENUE

**Port Authority
Bus Terminal**
225,000/day

Lincoln Tunnel
60,000/day

**Penn Station &
Moynihan**
600,000/day



**Times Square
Subway**
240,000/day

GDA Pedestrian
Counters log
**70,000 people
per day** at
W 36th & 8th Ave

Madison Square
Garden hosts
**6 million
guests, and 975
events** annually

Sources: MTA, GDA Pedestrian Cameras, and Amtrak

Current Challenges Along Eighth

EXISTING EFFORTS

The Garment District Alliance (GDA) has worked tirelessly to improve the Eighth Avenue corridor for over thirty years. GDA spends \$2.5 million each year on public safety, sanitation, and maintenance for Eighth Avenue. GDA security staff monitor the corridor from 6 AM to 8 PM, responding to more than 1,000 complaints every year regarding public safety concerns. GDA sanitation staff routinely sweep the street. Bulky waste and trash bags are placed along pedestrian islands out of necessity because the current road configuration prevents waste collection from accessing the curb from the street. GDA pays for horticulture in an attempt to soften the environment and contracts with social service workers to offer assistance to those in need. GDA has advocated for limited hours for POPS, removal of scaffolding, replacement of MTA subway grate covers, improved lighting, and the repair of broken streetscape elements. However, these efforts represent piecemeal fixes for degraded physical infrastructure whose solutions remain out of budget and political scope for a business improvement district.

Over the past two years, the Midtown Community Improvement Coalition (MCIC), has served as a forum for the GDA to collaborate with elected officials, local nonprofits, and 15 city agencies to actively manage Eighth Avenue. The MCIC has helped address social and infrastructure issues by activating community resources to drive operational changes. The group's efforts, while successful, are only able to address the low hanging fruit, not the underlying causes or misguided policies.

PUBLIC REALM IN DISTRESS

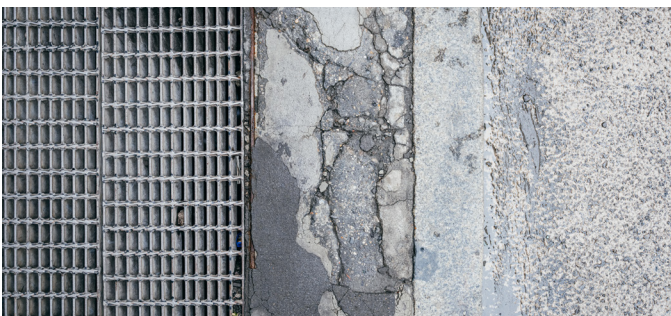
With Penn Station, Port Authority Bus Terminal, and the Times Square Subway, Eighth Avenue has the highest density of transit access in New York. Yet, the corridor remains underbuilt, lined by Class C office buildings. Private investment is discouraged by a history of public disinvestment. For decades, outdated zoning has limited development opportunities. The Midtown South Mixed-Use Plan only partially remedied this issue. Notably, 37 buildings, seven of which flank Eighth Avenue, were excluded from the opportunity to convert to residential use.

When visitors arrive on Eighth Avenue, they encounter a public realm marred by visual chaos, deteriorating infrastructure, and inadequate pedestrian space. The inconsistency of temporary sidewalks, painted curb extensions, and scant lighting create poor conditions that confuse pedestrians, bikers, and drivers alike. People trample tree pits, throw waste in planters, and walk in the street. These conditions are by design; disinvestment in the public realm has invited a culture of disorder which deters investment, discourages new housing and commercial development, and suppresses economic opportunity for Midtown West.

THE **GARMENT DISTRICT** ALLIANCE



GDA Sanitation Staff cleaning the extended sidewalk on Eighth Avenue



Photos of infrastructural conditions along Eighth Avenue

Current Challenges Along Eighth

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Ad hoc and informal traffic infrastructure fixes along the corridor endanger safety. In winter 2022, DOT added extended sidewalks, pedestrian islands, bump outs, and a parking protected bike lane to protect pedestrians and cyclists on Eighth Avenue. These interventions helped reduce overall crash counts by around 70%, but had little significant impact on pedestrian injuries, which only reduced around 12% over the same time period.

Looking at post-intervention crashes reveals repeated causes like driver distraction and pedestrian/cyclist confusion. Walking along Eighth reveals the design flaws that cause this confusion. Overwhelming traffic volumes, a lack of hard curbs, confusing or missing signage, and poorly maintained traffic infrastructure paired with a visually cluttered background of buildings and billboards collectively overstimulate people moving through the corridor. GDA stakeholders unanimously agree that the experience of walking along Eighth is an unpleasant one; a New York Times article in 2024 described safety issues along Eighth as “unsettling,” “lawless,” and “chaotic” as pedestrians weave through the roadbed, bikes zoom through the sidewalk, and cars sit stuck in gridlock.

These conditions are expected to worsen over time as the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Penn Station redevelopments increase ridership capacity. People use Eighth Avenue as their primary thoroughfare to and from the hubs, and between them. The Port Authority identified that the Bus Terminal redesign would create adverse impacts (i.e. congestion) on Eighth Avenue, yet left mitigation efforts to NYC DOT following the completion of the terminal. This reactionary, rather than proactive, approach is unacceptable when overcrowding and congestion are already problems today.

A redesign is needed to protect people by unifying the streetscape, providing clear markings and signage, and reducing real and perceived lack of safety. As Penn Station and Port Authority Bus Terminal undergo redesigns to increase their capacity, there must be a plan to prepare the street to meet expected demand. Both projects anticipate pedestrian volumes will exceed sidewalk, crosswalk, and corner capacity along Eighth Avenue by 2040. Solutions to overcrowding should start now.

FLOODING

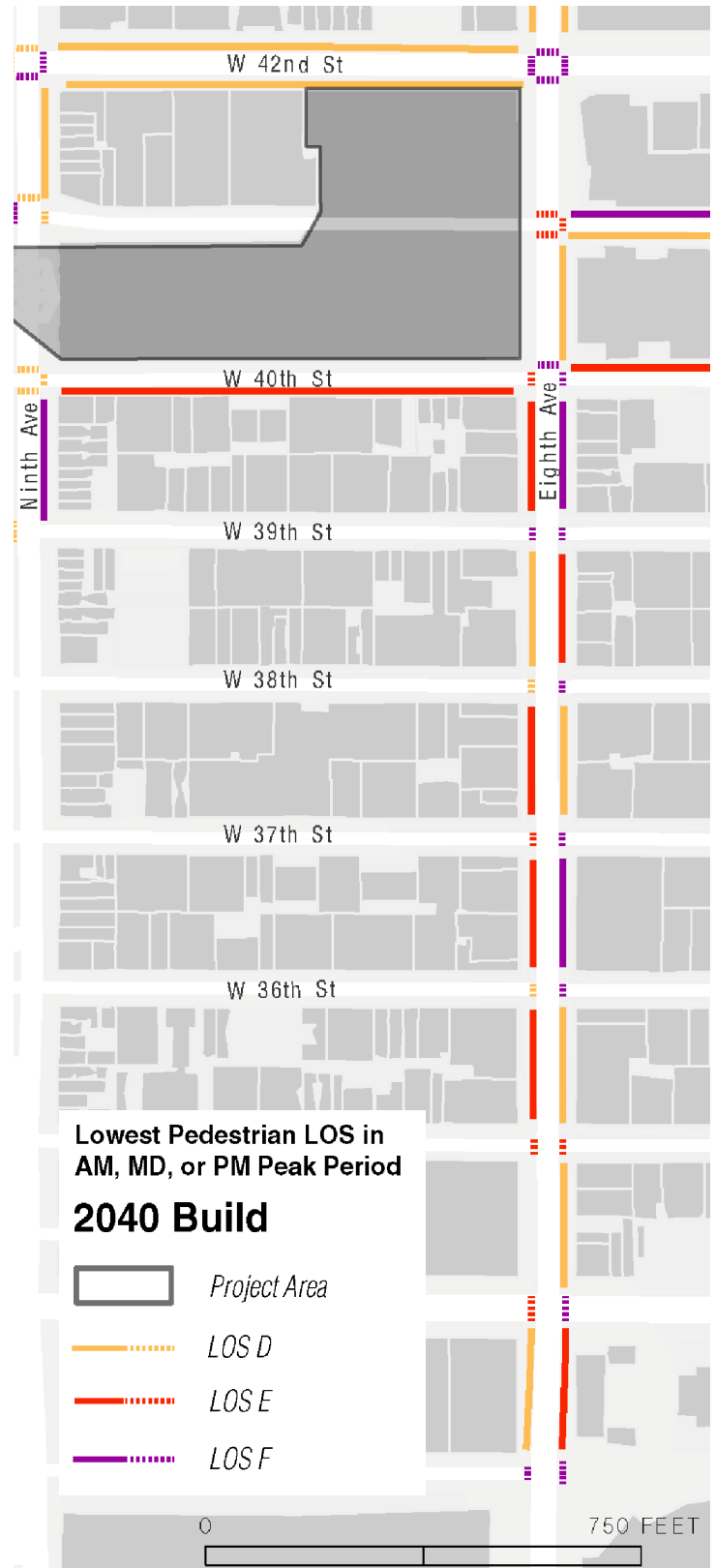
As severe rainstorms increase in intensity and duration, pluvial flooding increasingly threatens Eighth Avenue. A 100-year storm dropping 3.66 inches of rain within an hour would inundate the most critical portion of Eighth Avenue between Penn Station and Port Authority Bus Terminal with over 1 foot of water. This is increasingly a concern for public safety that should be addressed as part of a comprehensive plan for Eighth Avenue.

Year	Total Crashes	Pedestrian Injuries	Pedestrian Injury Rate
2014	587	39	7%
2015	519	21	4%
2016	440	32	7%
2017	378	16	4%
2018	358	29	8%
2019	308	20	6%
2020	91	13	14%
2021	92	10	11%
2022	108	12	11%
2023	85	11	13%
2024	93	21	23%
2025	94	22	23%

Chart showing total crashes, pedestrian injuries, and pedestrian injury rate per year from 2014 to Dec 2025 along Eighth Avenue between W 33rd and W 42nd Streets. Data from NYC OpenData Motor Vehicle Collisions - Crashes dataset.



Map from NYC Stormwater Maps showing extreme flood conditions (3.66 inches/hour). Dark blue areas are deep and contiguous flooding greater than 1 foot deep.



LOS = Level of Service. LOS F is considered severely restricted movement. Map by WSP, 2024, from Page B.4.3-21 of the Bus Terminal Replacement Project Appendix B.4.3. Pedestrian Analysis

Current Challenges Along Eighth

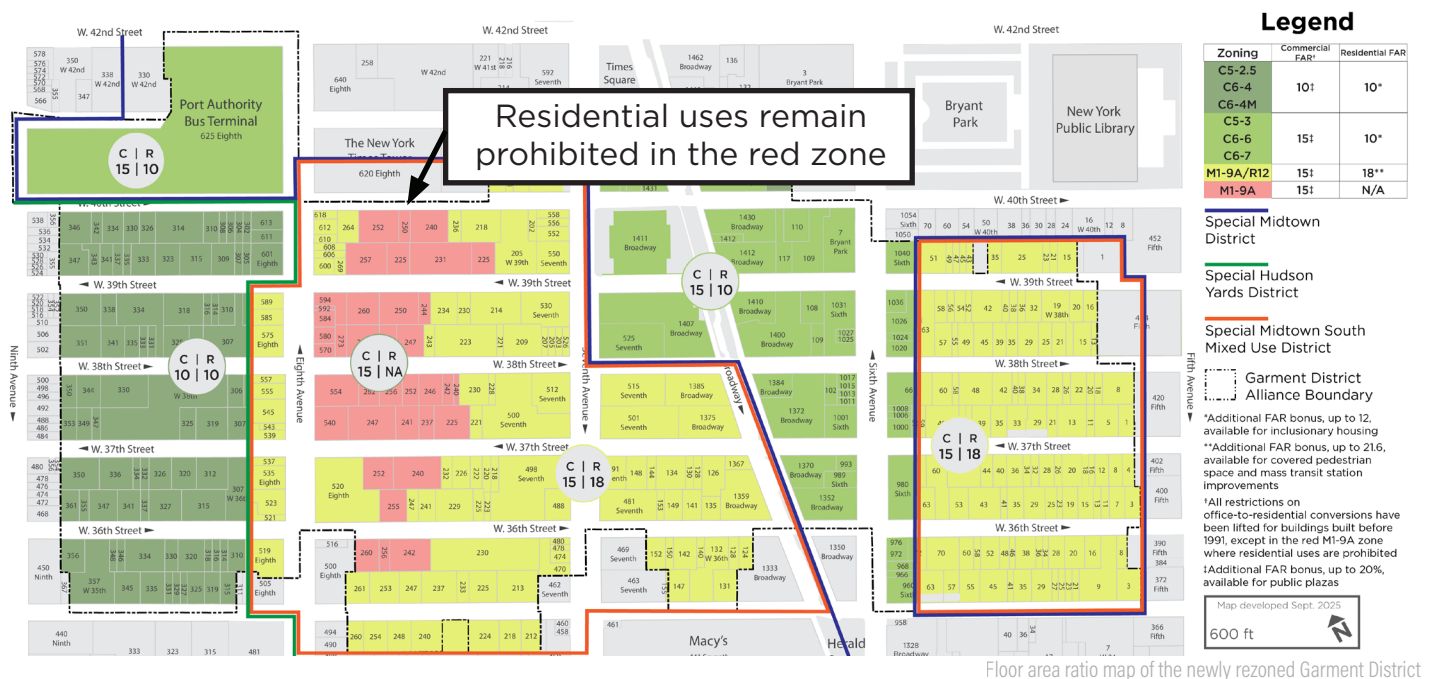
BARRIERS TO RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Midtown South Mixed Use Rezoning was intended to unlock the potential for up to 10,000 new units of housing by removing restrictions on residential conversions between Eighth and Ninth Avenues and allowing for residential conversions and development in the former industrial M1-6 zones of Midtown.

However, the rezoning has several critical flaws. There are 37 buildings, 7 of which flank Eighth Avenue, that were excluded from the opportunity to convert to residential, representing a potential loss of 1,000 units of housing, 250 of which would have been affordable units. Unlike housing in outer Boroughs, these homes would have been in the heart of Midtown, with highly desirable access to employment and transportation.

In addition, limiting residential conversion opportunities deters investment and reduces the value of these properties and those adjacent to them. Disinvestment ultimately impacts the public realm, which further discourages residential development in an area which is perfectly situated for it.

Lifting these restrictions and investing in the streetscape would encourage the development of much-needed affordable housing along Eighth Avenue. This would allow a new resident population to create a 24/7 mixed use community that would improve real and perceived safety. These new residents would also advocate for the corridor, which has been a political forgotten stepchild for decades. Eighth Avenue serves as the border between Community Districts, State Senate Districts, Sanitation Districts, Neighborhood Tabulation Areas, and Citywide District Tabulation Areas, always on the margin. Building a population in this area would spur narratives that recenter attention on the value and importance of Eighth Avenue.



EIGHTH AVENUE TODAY



Pedestrian overcrowding along Eighth Avenue during rush hour

WHAT EIGHTH AVENUE COULD BE WITH INVESTMENT



Rendering from Future of Fifth

How Eighth can Flourish

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF EIGHTH

At this critical time, strategic improvements to Eighth Avenue's streetscape and infrastructure will transform this vital artery into a corridor that is befitting its role as the place where New York begins; a place where people want to live, work, and visit.

These suggested improvements are informed by decades of work by the GDA and our partners to address infrastructural issues along Eighth Avenue that have been limited by a lack of policy change and public investment. As funding flows towards the transit hubs anchoring the corridor - \$8 billion to Penn Station and \$11 billion to Port Authority Bus Terminal - the city must seize this opportunity and invest in the environment which connects them: Eighth Avenue.

A Comprehensive Master Plan

With a comprehensive master plan to create a world-class streetscape to open the corridor to residents and new investment, Eighth Avenue will become a model for how holistic urban reimagination can invite housing opportunity, drive economic development, and create lasting change.

Complete Street Approach

A complete street approach is needed to create a compelling public realm. Updated, brighter lighting is needed to illuminate sidewalks and deter crime. Full extended sidewalks and concrete curb extensions are necessary to accommodate the massive pedestrian capacity of the improved transit hubs anchoring the corridor; a widened protected bike line will accommodate increased bike traffic; green infrastructure will provide shade and a calming aesthetic; flood mitigation efforts will reduce the risk of pluvial flooding; strategically designed seating will allow people to enjoy Eighth Avenue without destroying horticulture; improved signage will support wayfinding for tourists and commuters.

Safety First

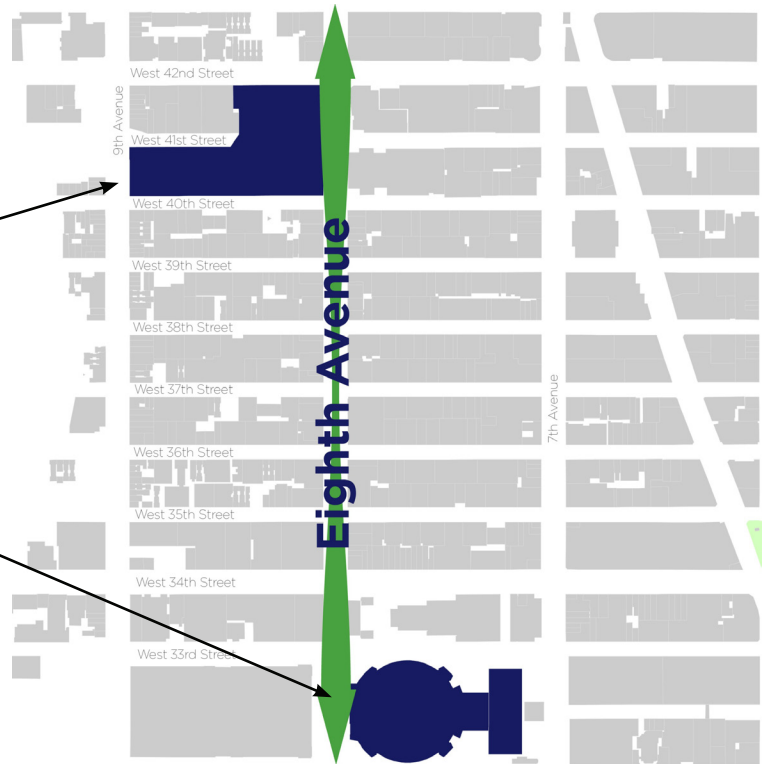
Safer roads, bike lanes, and sidewalks are needed to prevent accidents and protect Eighth Avenue's visitors. Real and perceived safety are primary concerns as people navigate the corridor. The multimodal mix of pedestrians, bikes, cars, trucks, pedicabs, vendors, and the occasional horse carriage all compete for space, often leading to conflict. The current car, bike, sidewalk, and crosswalk configurations need to be reworked and made permanent to improve safety along Eighth Avenue.

Port Authority Bus Terminal

\$11 Billion

Penn Station

\$8 Billion

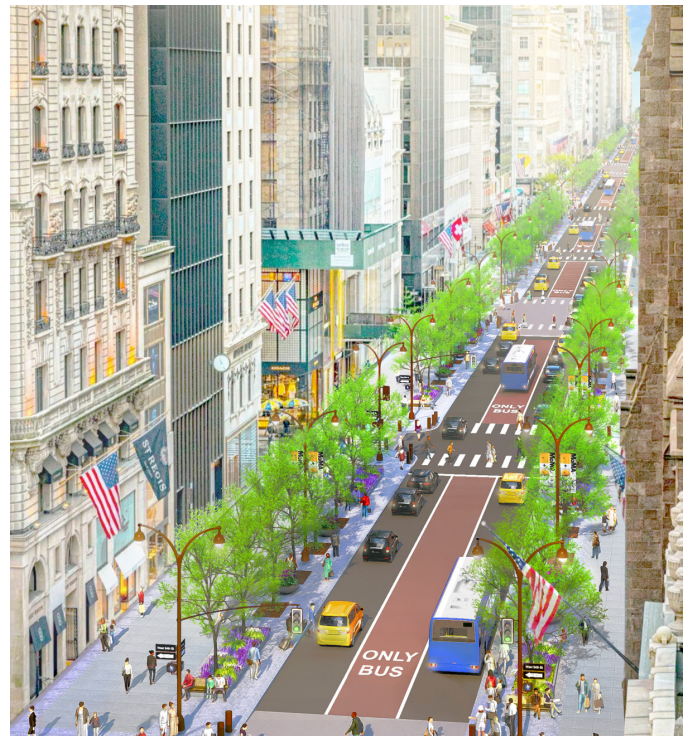


Eighth Avenue serves as a vital connection between the two unprecedented transit hub investments anchoring the corridor

Current Conditions



Possible Future



Streetscape renderings from the Future of Fifth plan for Fifth Avenue

Putting Eighth First

MOVING FORWARD

Eighth Avenue's challenges are significant but solvable. The corridor's assets—unmatched connectivity, potential for housing, massive pedestrian volumes, substantial employment base, and tourism infrastructure—provide the foundation for transformation. Comprehensive public investment commensurate with the corridor's importance to the city's economy and reputation is sorely needed. The Future of Eighth Avenue depends on it.

This effort cannot happen alone. It will require a robust coalition of partners to identify shared goals, create a cohesive vision, secure funding, design a plan, and implement it. The Garment District Alliance is actively working to connect stakeholders to build momentum for this effort. As we do this work, we invite people to reach out, share guidance, and identify a path forward. The goal is to highlight that investment and systemic change are needed to improve Eighth Avenue, and that the current transportation projects anchoring the corridor present the opportune moment to act.

To provide feedback or ask questions, please reach out to Barbara Blair, the President of the Garment District Alliance, via email at bblair@garmentdistrictnyc.com



Eighth Avenue looking north





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All photos taken by Alexander Ayer unless otherwise noted

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