

TURNOUT!

Celebrating NYC's Diversity with Hyper-local Arts and Culture



Project Summary
& Evaluation

SITU / DESIGN TRUST
FOR PUBLIC SPACE

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What Happened

Introduction

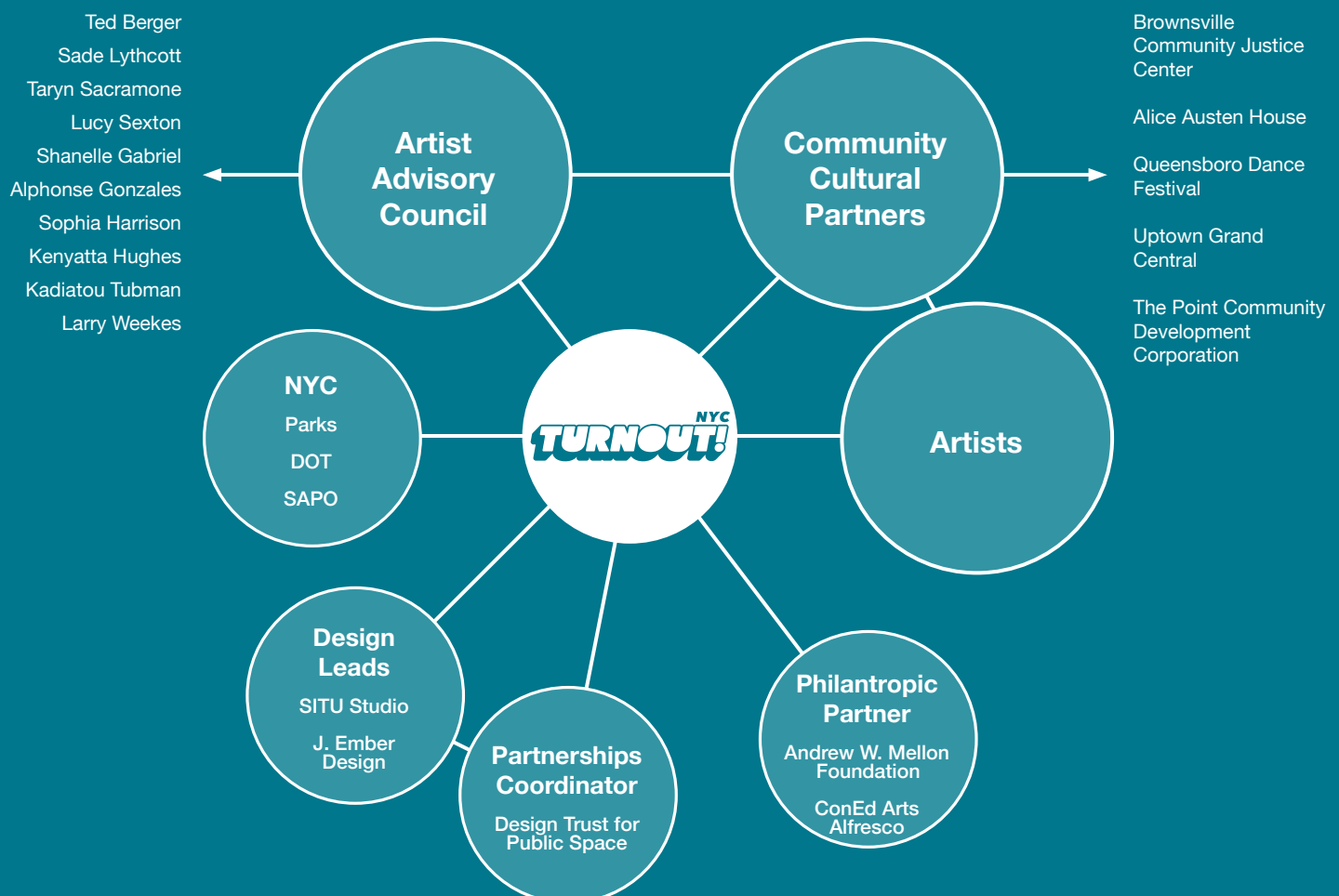
We believe arts organizations and artists in historically marginalized and underinvested neighborhoods are critical anchors in the city's short and long-term health. Turnout NYC prioritized these anchors and the audiences they serve.

In New York City, art institutions concentrate in Midtown Manhattan. Such distribution overshadows the outer boroughs, which contain vibrant cultural production but often need access to cultural and public venues. With support from the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, guidance from an **Artist Advisory Council** of 10 NYC-based arts advocates, and a partnership between **The Design Trust for Public Space** and **SITU Studio**, we developed Turnout NYC—a new, more distributed cultural production model that provided resources for community-based programming across the city. Using a model of trust-based collaboration, Turnout NYC showcased the work of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other historically marginalized artists by making physical, financial, and social resources accessible.

The Turnout team carefully selected and integrated five **Cultural Community Partners** to lead this regional borough-based effort: Brownsville Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, Alice Austen House in Staten Island, Queensboro Dance Festival in Queens, Uptown Grand Central in Manhattan, and The Point Community Development Corporation in the Bronx. These five partners joined a collaborative process to design and manufacture an innovative “Kit-of-Parts” that serves as public infrastructure. The Kit-of-Parts serve as public infrastructure with a user-friendly design; community members can easily reconfigure the Kit to support a wide variety of hyperlocal cultural programs. Turnout's Kit-of-Parts has four primary elements: a modular stage, a site marker, two benches, and a ramp. These four elements can store secondary placemaking components such as folding seats, tables, signage, and shading. When not used for a cultural event, the Kit can remain outside as plaza furniture so local community members can keep these public spaces active and vibrant. The **Department of Transportation** (DOT) and the **Department of Parks & Recreation** (NYC Parks) helped inform a compliant design.

In addition to the Kit-of-Parts, Turnout NYC included soft infrastructure to support Cultural Community Partners with the permitting, invoicing, marketing, and promotion necessary to activate public spaces in New York City. Such support varied based on the needs of each site and partner. We hired **Natalie Romero** as a Communications and Storytelling Fellow. We also hired **Julie Ember** and **Susannah Laramée-Kid** as Public Space Design Advisor and Evaluation Consultant, respectively.

In the summer of 2022, Turnout NYC was successfully deployed in all five boroughs of NYC across varied space typologies — a cul-de-sac in Brooklyn, a historic park in Staten Island, a de-mapped street in Queens, under the train tracks in Harlem, and an outdoor community campus in the Bronx — hosting over 100 free public events, supporting over 500 artists, and bringing community-led programming to thousands of audience members. Based on project evaluation, Turnout NYC impacted the city’s cultural landscape by empowering historically under-resourced artists, expanding opportunities to experience arts and culture, and serving as an advocacy platform toward a more vibrant, equitable, and resilient NYC. We are convinced that such an impact should continue beyond this one-season initiative.



NYC
TURNOUT!



Frank Knight, Hip-Hop artist at Turnout Brownsville

Goals of the Project

The idea of Turnout NYC started in August 2021, when NYC cultural venues began reopening after the COVID-19 lockdown. Back then, the Design Trust for Public Space partnered with SITU Studio and four inaugural members of Turnout's Advisory Council: Sade Lythcott, CEO of the National Black Theater; Taryn Sacramone, Executive Director of Queens Theater; Lucy Sexton, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Culture & Arts; and Ted Berger, Executive Director Emeritus of the New York Foundation for the Arts. Together, we drafted five goals for Turnout NYC: we drafted five goals for Turnout NYC:

1 Provide infrastructure for artists and cultural producers to show work and sustain employment.

In collaboration with community partners, local artists, and diverse stakeholders, co-design and build a flexible system of outdoor cultural venues that successfully adapted to a range of community needs and could be replicated in public spaces across the city.

2 Increase access to arts and culture in historically underrepresented neighborhoods.

Help local artists expand cultural offerings and programs in neighborhoods with less access to venues and resources. Ensure these programs reflect and lift key narratives of place, heritage, and identity.



Hip-Hop Celebration at Turnout Bronx

3 Give arts organizations, artists, and community leaders greater agency in defining programming and curatorial practice.

Respond to new initiatives such as Open Culture and support local entities with technical assistance, infrastructure, and partnerships to allow more expansive and inclusive programming. Resource these groups so that their work can focus on their mission and artistic excellence.

4 Cultivate the professional development of local artists, technicians, and organizations.

Provide artists and allied professionals immediate opportunities to perform and engage in their craft while receiving appropriate compensation and support. Use these opportunities to make a case for long-term support for professional development, particularly in historically excluded groups such as Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, immigrant, differently-abled, and LGBTQ+ populations.

5 Demonstrate a scalable strategy to transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant cultural venues.

Create a model for leveraging public spaces as accessible venues for arts and culture, particularly non-traditional sites such as streets and plazas. The multi-functional importance of public space has become more evident during the pandemic, particularly as a place for conducting small-scale business



Yoga Class at Turnout Queens



eGALitarian Brass Band at Turnout Staten Island

Bases for Decision Making

The Turnout NYC project involved hundreds of partners, advisors, and artists. Decision-making was complex and purposeful. The following list indexes Turnout's decision-making background and process.

Category One: Partnership Development

Advisory Council: The Artist Advisory Council helped ensure the project remained responsive to the diverse needs of artists and cultural communities across the five boroughs. The Council itself reflected different artistic disciplines and geographies of New York City. The selection process used a broad outreach of partners and colleagues. It intentionally avoided building celebrity associations, but instead created a working group of individuals with experience in operationalizing the goals of Turnout NYC.

Local Partnership: Five Community Cultural Partners (CCPs) led local programming in order to a) connect this work to local perspectives, b) test different kinds of partner arrangements, and c) create capacity across the city. These organizations were purposefully diverse, ranging from cultural organizations with strong attachments to a particular place or place-based organizations with a robust arts portfolio. Instead of selecting patterns through a Request for Proposals, The Design Trust crafted a more flexible interview process that sought greater accessibility for organizations that lacked the typical requirements. After extensive outreach via Borough Art Councils, Turnout's Advisory Council, Culture@3, and local organizations, we held one-on-one meetings with eighteen organizations. All the selected CCPs had 1) a relationship to public space, 2) a record supporting diverse artists, 3) some experience in public arts, and 4) a need to do such work through a project like Turnout NYC. In the future, Turnout NYC can expand how it conducts outreach and continue to get support from the Artist Advisory Council or other constituents.

Contracting: Community Cultural Partners directly contacted, hired, and managed artists. Such simplicity helped ensure accountability, promote trust, and build capacity for the local organizations. CCPs were able to assist and pay artists directly. In the future, artists outside the CCPs' network should be able to use the stage, perhaps through an open calendar for additional programming. helped directly. In the future, artists outside the CCP network could be able to use the stage, perhaps through an open calendar for additional programming.

Category Two: Design and Fabrication

Collaborative design: SITU Studio and J. Ember Design worked with local users, including audiences and event producers, to co-create a Kit-of-Parts based on local wishes and capacities. We hosted virtual and in-person design workshops in Brownsville with operators and local youth. We also interviewed Cultural Partners and other local organizations to learn from ongoing priorities and past experiences.

Regulations: The Kit required compliance from the different city agencies owning and overseeing each site. We integrated the various requirements and permitting timelines into a single design and traveling calendar. For example, the Department of Transportation (DOT) required signage stating the rules for using their plazas. We worked with CCPs to integrate DOT's rules into the Kit's signage component and adapted the typical language to be more welcoming. Signage components also incorporated site-specific information such as programming and available resources from CCPs and other local organizations.

Permitting and filing: The Kit's design sought exemption from the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) by limiting the total height to under 10 feet. For this reason, the Kit did not provide shade canopy over the stage. We avoided filing with DOB because the processing time would have exceeded the project's timeline. Such exemption allowed savings on hiring an architect-of-record, an expeditor, and a general contractor for every site.



Co-design Workshop at Brownsville, Brooklyn

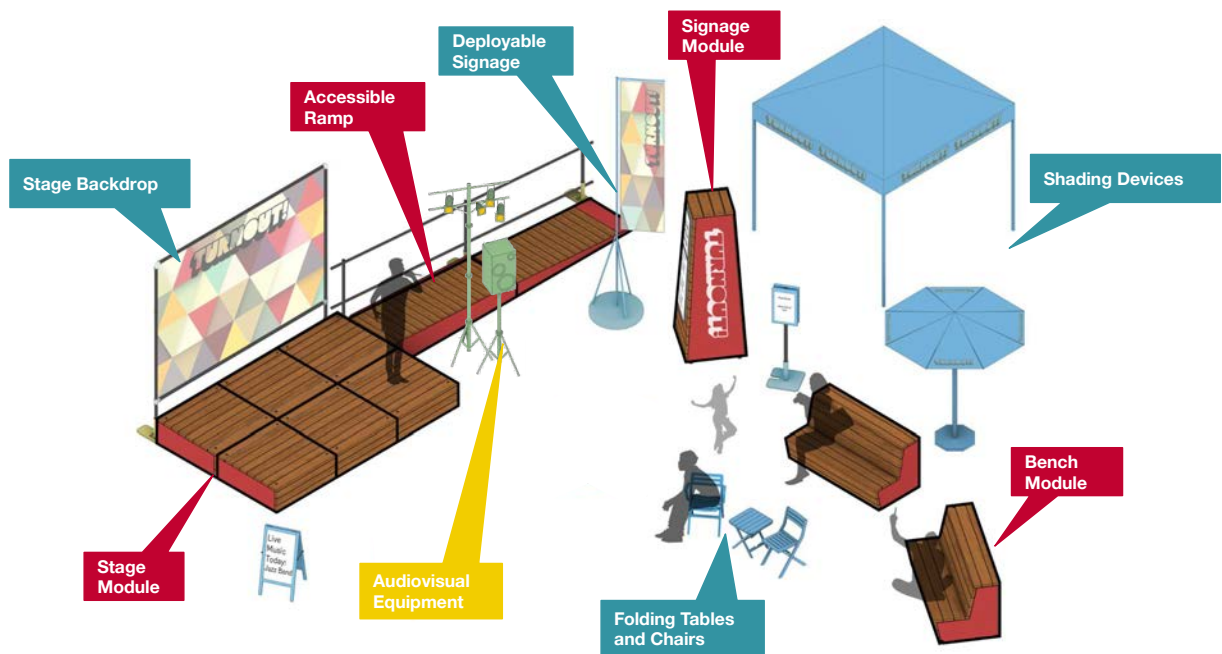
Materials: SITU considered weather exposure with minimum maintenance and vigilance for material selection. As a result, frames and structures use metal for its heavier weight — to reduce the threat of theft — and resistance to damage. Surfaces use wood for its perception as a welcoming material that can weather. Both metal and wood can be touched up easily.

Operability and safety: SITU fabricated an intuitive design and an Ikea-like operations manual to allow CCPs’ staff and volunteers to easily use the Kit, regardless of their experience with cultural production. In addition, we hosted four-hour-long training sessions for CCPs’ staff and external operators at each site. The design, manual, and training also included wind management.

Usability and enjoyment: Joy and comfort of artists and the general public were a priority. The Kit is sturdy enough to serve as a tap-dancing platform and other intensive performances. It can be used 24/7 by anyone regardless of their relationship with CCPs or physical abilities. The design integrates an ADA-compliant ramp to access the elevated stage, and the seating incorporates backrests for audience comfort.

Adaptability: SITU fabricated two identical Kits that successfully adapted to five different spaces and two different levels of permanence. We sought different typologies of public spaces to test how a one-size-fits-all design would work at a cul-de-sac in Brooklyn, a public building in Staten Island, a demapped street in Queens, under elevated train tracks in Harlem, and a waterfront space in The Bronx. At the beginning of the 2022 season, one Kit was donated as a permanent asset to Brownsville. A second Kit traveled to the four other locations, staying for approximately one month. At the end of the 2022 season, the traveling Kit was donated as a permanent asset to the Bronx.

Kit-of-Parts	Borough	Turnout NYC Site	Type of Space
Permanent Kit	Brooklyn	Osborn Plaza	Cul-de-sac
Traveling Kit	Staten Island	Alice Austen Park	Waterfront park on historic property
	Queens	Travers Park	Demapped street
	Manhattan	125th Street East Plaza	Plaza under the train tracks
	Bronx	The Point Riverside Campus	Publicly accessible private front yard



Up: Turnout's Kit-of-Parts designed by SITU

Down: One of the many Kit configurations at Osborn Plaza



Category Three: Administrative and Management

Financial support: Budgeting sought to address the needs of artists and small local organizations. The Design Trust led a straightforward but flexible contracting of partners. The CCPs received up to 80% upfront payments to prevent them from paying out-of-pocket. Each site received \$30,000 for CCP's overhead and \$70,000 for artists' payments. Within this split, each CCP had the freedom to design their budget.

Administrative support: The Design Trust aimed to understand and meet the varying capacities of each partner. Organizations asked for customized support levels, including monthly or bi-weekly check-ins, invoicing artists, advising on how to secure insurance, connecting with corresponding authorities, and/or providing site design services for each public space. Julie Ember, public space designer and founder of J. Ember Design, led site design services.

Category Four: Communications and Evaluation

Promotion: The Design Trust crafted a de-centralized outreach plan led by local organizations with shared communication resources. These efforts resulted in a mixture of city-wide news coverage and local features in borough-based or neighborhood publications. We created a brand identity for the project, including applications such as the turnoutnyc.org website and social media templates that CCPs could edit and post. The shared marketing package integrated Turnout's brand into the colors of all components and signage elements. The package included interchangeable templates and sizing for integrating local art.



Turnout Site Marker with local art in Brownsville, Staten Island, Queens, and Harlem.

Storytelling: A project fellow, Natalie Romero-Marx, led an artistic storytelling project. She created six videos showcasing individual stories from each site and two videos about the overall project. Andre Whitehead, an emerging professional photographer from the NYC Department of Corrections' NeON Program, was hired to capture supplementary images for the project.

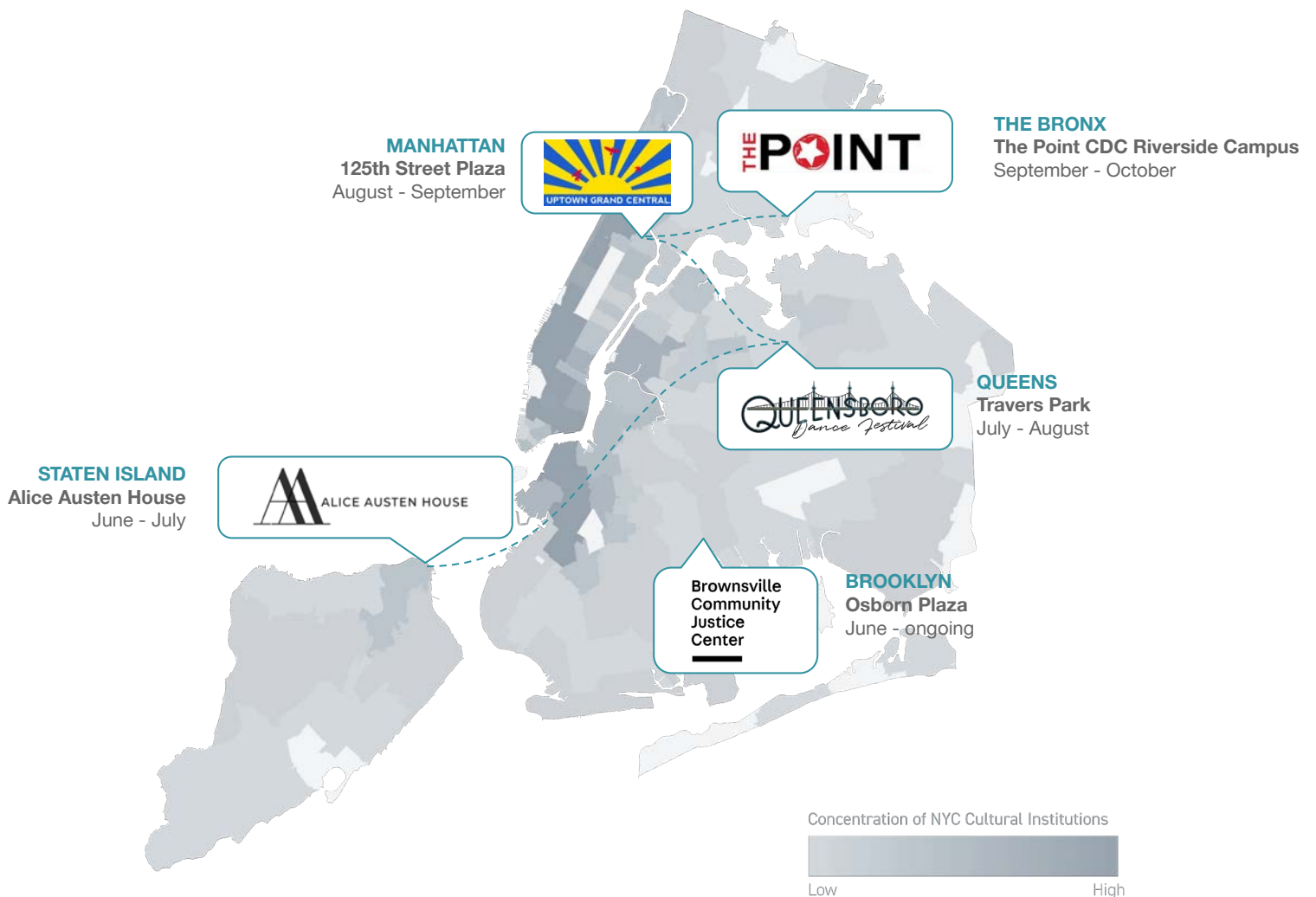
Evaluation: In collaboration with Susannah Laramée-Kid, evaluator and strategy consultant for arts and culture, we developed and implemented an evaluation framework. This document includes the results of such evaluation.

Turnout NYC Media Clips 2022-2023

Date	Outlet	Headline
5/3/2022	Harlem World Magazine	Turnout NYC Pilots New Venues For Equitable Arts Access From Harlem To Hollis
5/4/2022	Crain's New York	Design Trust pilots new outdoor venues for more equitable arts access
5/4/2022	AIA NY NEWS	SITU, in collaboration with the Design Trust for Public Space, has launched Turnout NYC
5/13/2022	Queen's Gazette	2022 Queensboro Dance Festival Announces Lineup
5/19/2022	Broadway World	26 Dance Companies to be Featured in 2022 Queensboro Dance Festival Tour
5/26/2022	Archinect	New arts initiative by SITU and Design Trust for Public Space builds architectural kit-of-parts (...)
6/2/2022	Queen's Gazette	Queensboro Dance Festival starts Saturday
6/17/2022	Queens Chronicle	Dance Festival a reflection of the borough
6/27/2022	QNS/ Queen's Courier	Jackson Heights Beautification Group's concert series returning to Travers Park
7/15/2022	Queen's Gazette	Music, dance and more at Travers this summer
7/15/2022	Broadway World	Shreya Rawat Joins Gotham Dance For Queensborough Fest
7/29/2022	Broadway World	National Black Theatre's LEARN TO LOVE YOURSELF: SILENT DISCO & PORTRAIT SERIES (...)
8/3/2022	Harlem World Magazine	Harlem's National Black Theatre Begins 55th Season Of Programming With A Unique Event (...)
8/24/2022	Timeout NYC	The best things to do in NYC this Weekend
8/24/2022	Timeout NYC	Learn to Love Yourself: Silent Disco & Portrait Series
10/7/2022	AMNY	Turnout The Bronx
10/8/2022	CityGuide NY	Turnout The Bronx
10/8/2022	Do NYC	Turnout The Bronx Performance
8/17/2023	Timeout NYC	The best things to do in NYC this Weekend
8/17/2023	Timeout NYC	Learn to Love Yourself: Silent Disco & Portrait Series
8/29/2023	Fast Company	The Best Designs for Social Justice in 2023

Community Cultural Partners

Turnout NYC delegated local programming and site management to five Community Cultural Partners (CCPs), all located in areas with a low concentration of cultural institutions. We worked with each partner to identify an underutilized public space and create two identical Kit-of-Parts. One Kit was donated to the Brownsville Community Center. A second Kit traveled around Staten Island, Queens, Manhattan, and The Bronx. This second Kit lasted one month at each location and, at the end of its trip, was donated to The Point CDC in The Bronx.



Site Profile: Brooklyn

Brownsville Community Justice Center

Site: Osborn Plaza

Type of public space: Cul-de-sac in between two NYCHA housing campuses

Space owner: Public; managed by DOT with a stewardship agreement with BCJC

Communities of interest: People at-risk for community violence

Partner's mission: Prevent crime by investing in local youth and improving the physical landscape of the neighborhood.

Turnout Season and Kit's Permanence: Permanent, from 6/1/22 onwards.



Osborne Plaza before Turnout



Family Day at Turnout Brownsville

Site Profile: Staten Island

Alice Austen House Museum

Site: Alice Austen Park

Type of public space: Waterfront park on the historic property of Alice Austen, an LGBTQ+ photographer.

Space owner: Public; managed by NYC Parks with oversight from Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Communities of interest: Artists based in Staten Island and Queer communities.

Partner's mission: Foster creative expression, explore personal identity, educate, and inspire the public. Expand and preserve the legacy of a noted, pioneering photographer.

Turnout Season: 20 events, with 118 artists total, and 1,872 attendees.

Kit's Permanence: From 6/9/2022 to 7/11/2022.



Alice Austen Park before Turnout



L'Unicorns Party at Turnout Staten Island

Site Profile: Queens

Queensboro Dance Festival

Site: Travers Park

Type of public space: Demapped street

Space owner: Public; managed by NYC DOT with oversight of the Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) for programming permits.

Communities of interest: Queens-based artists and audiences of diverse cultures & styles.

Partner's mission: Strengthen the dance community in Queens, and garner a greater appreciation for the multiplicity and diversity of Queens dance.

Turnout Season: 31 events, with 144 artists total.

Kit's Permanence: From 7/11/2022 to 8/7/2022.



Travers Park before Turnout



Dance Back with Fanike at Turnout Queens

Site Profile: Manhattan

Uptown Grand Central

Curatorial Partner: National Black Theater

Site: East 125th Street Plaza

Type of public space: Plaza under Metro North train tracks.

Space owner: public; managed by DOT, with oversight of the Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) for programming permits and stewardship from Uptown Grand Central. Overhead tracks are managed by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

Communities of interest: Businesses, residents, and neighborhood organizations across East Harlem.

Partner's mission: Transform East 125th Street into a thriving corridor by delivering programs that put advocacy into action.

Turnout Season: 8 events, with 20 artists total.

Kit's Permanence: From 8/11/2022 to 9/8/2022. In 2023, the Kit returned to host four silent discos and the Party On Park 2023.



125th St Plaza before Turnout



Harlem Fashion Show at Turnout Harlem

Site Profile: Bronx

The Point Community Development Corporation

Site: The Point CDC Riverside Campus.

Type of public space: Privately-owned front yard with public access.

Space owner: The Point CDC.

Communities of interest: Communities of the South Bronx and in particular the changing Hunts Point neighborhood.

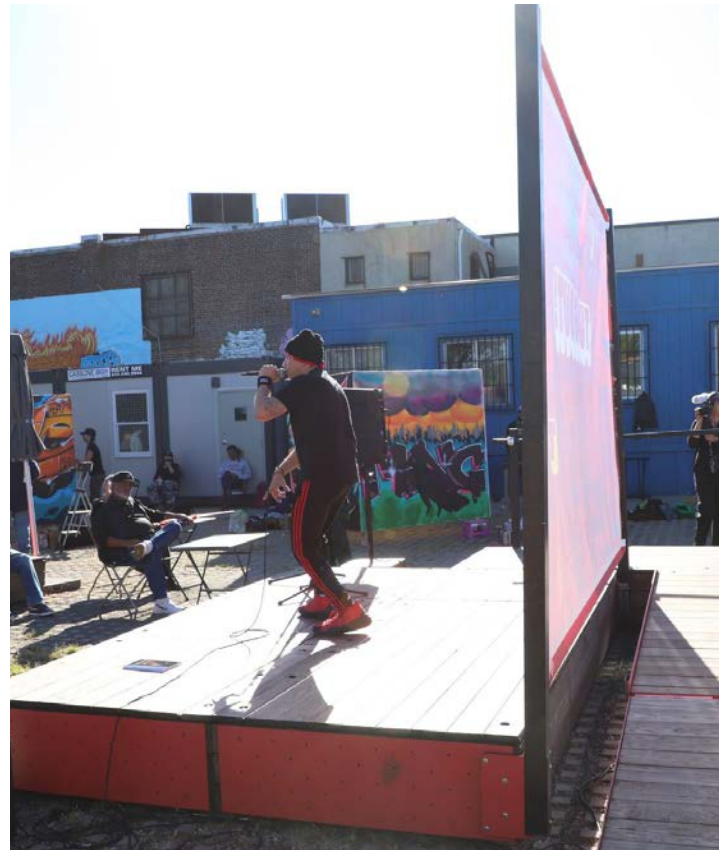
Partner's mission: Youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx.

Turnout Season: 15 events, with 107 artists total, from 9/8 to 10/8/22 and onwards.

Kit's Permanence: From 9/8/2022 to 10/8/22 and onwards. At the end of the 2022 season, The Point received the Kit as a donation to support more cultural programming.



The Point's Riverside Campus



Hip Hop Day at Turnout Bronx

TURNOUT!



Hispanic Heritage celebration at Turnout Bronx

Evaluation

In 2022, Turnout NYC successfully piloted a path towards a more equitable future for arts and culture in NYC, expanding economic and geographic access and including typically underrepresented demographic groups. Turnout NYC had positive impacts across its five project goals. In this summary, we expand on those impacts and describe the potential recommendations further to advance the efficacy and reach of each goal.

This project evaluation is based on data collected from various Turnout stakeholders, with the guidance of Susannah Laramée-Kid, evaluator and strategy consultant for arts and culture. From September 2022 to March 2023, the Design Trust conducted interviews with each of the five Cultural Community Partners (CCPs); facilitated three focus groups with a total of eleven artists; implemented an artist feedback survey with forty-nine respondents; hosted multiple in-person and virtual workshops with CCPs, the Artist Advisory Council, and project partners.

The various Turnout stakeholders believe this project is uniquely positioned to continue advancing a more equitable future for NYC's artists, audiences, and the small local organizations able to support them. They are disappointed about not having more seasons and want Turnout NYC to continue. They have shared ideas to improve the long-term program. Most feedback focuses on growing and adding to existing aspects of Turnout NYC rather than making substantial changes.



Kingdom Dance Company at Turnout Queens

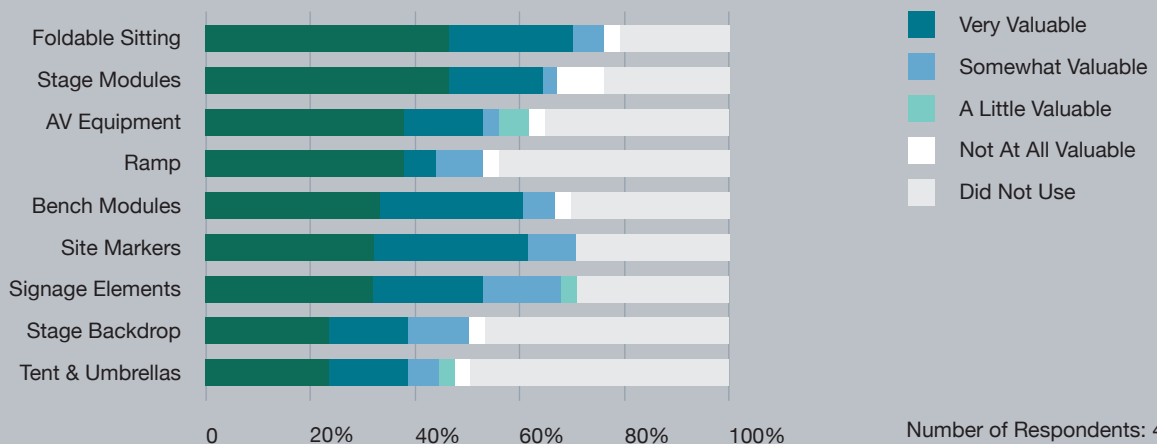
Goal One: Provide infrastructure for artists and cultural producers to show work and sustain employment.

Key Takeaway: CCPs want to keep the current model of sharing hard and soft infrastructure. CCPs prefer borrowing rather than owning a Kit. They think the Kit must continue to include support for cultural administration, production, and promotion.

Hard Infrastructure. The physical infrastructure was well received and regarded as a significant success. The Kit allowed CCPs to expand the type of performances they could physically support, draw larger audiences, and make the spaces feel more like welcoming public spaces and cultural venues.

- The Kit supported diverse programming with various performance types that range from solo artists to large collectives, including an 18-piece jazz ensemble. The Kit was flexible and adaptable and used in ways that weren't even imagined during the design process, such as hosting a fashion show and a live graffiti exhibition.
- Artists helped us rank the Kit components, with foldable seating, stage modules, A/V equipment, and ramp as the top four extremely valuable components. CCPs shared specific ideas for improvement, such as providing more seating for audiences.

Artists valued Foldable Seating and Stage Modules the Most



- CCPs want to borrow the stage on a regular basis but not own it. Most expressed several challenges in taking on such responsibility, including administrative capacities, storage capabilities, liabilities, and transportation costs. Some also said that the Kit-of-Parts was meant to be mobile and shared, so one organization or space owning a Kit would contradict the mission of a traveling Kit.
- The Kit, as a tangible space intervention, attracts audiences and performers. It also increased seating capacity so more people could attend events than ever before.

Soft Infrastructure. Turnout NYC created a network of people and organizations focused on helping CCPs and artists succeed. CCPs expressed that the Kit-of-Parts and the financial support were crucial to making Turnout NYC happen. Yet, site design services, marketing support, communication with city officials, and advice about insurance and permitting were also essential to its success.

- Assisting CCPs with permitting processes allowed many of them to better understand and improve their relationship with government agencies. One CCP improved their relationship with the Parks Department. Another CCP learned to expect and ask for higher standards and physical improvements to their public space from the agency they work with.
- SITU provided a 4-hour training session at each site. CCPs were enthusiastic during the sessions and found them necessary. They would want additional or more detailed training sessions for their staff as well as trained staff on-site to help reconfigure the Kit.
- CCPs valued the social media marketing templates, bright colors of the Kit, and other marketing support the Design Trust provided. Turnout NYC developed limited city-wide promotion and focused storytelling. One CCP acknowledged that Turnout's advertisement in local newspapers successfully attracted people from the neighborhood. Yet CCP and artists want greater support for both city-wide and local marketing.
- CCPs felt hesitant about owning the physical Kit-of-Parts and appreciated the administrative management that Turnout NYC provided.

Case Study Brooklyn

For the Kit-of-Parts, SITU held multiple co-design workshops with residents and operators from Brownsville. Once built, one of the two Kit-of-Parts was installed in Osborn Plaza and donated to the Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC). In Brooklyn and all the other sites, SITU created a user manual and facilitated a four-hour training. J. Ember Design produced site plans with different Kit configurations based on programmatic and spatial needs. In addition to the user's manual, site plans, and training that all the sites received, J. Ember held a month-long training on curation and production in Brownsville that enabled local youth.

According to BCJC, the Kit reflects the ideas discussed during the co-design workshops, and people really value that. Since the Kit was installed in June of 2022, people have been using it frequently and in different ways, from eating lunch to organizing their own performances. The CCP is surprised because none of the Kit components have been vandalized or stolen. To test local stewardship, the CCP left the foldable chairs and tables unlocked for a few nights. Although it would be easy to steal this light furniture, people left it in place and respected it as a community asset.

BCJC tried to activate both the Turnout space and another neighboring cul-de-sac concurrently, but compared to the neighboring space, the Turnout space got larger audiences. The Kit is noticeable and draws people in. Its physicality gives visibility to both the CCPs and artists. BCJC said that the Kit gives artists a space to perform, work on performance skills, collect photos and videos for their reel, and gain exposure within their neighborhood. The Kit has increased BCJC's recognition for their positive impact in the neighborhood and their parenting organization, the Center for Justice Innovation (CJI).

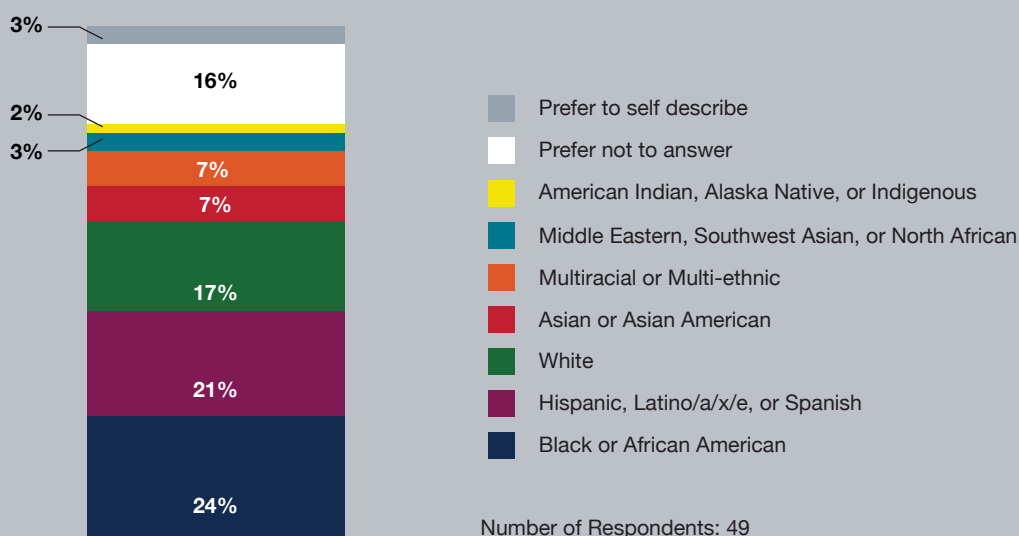
Goal Two: Increase access to arts and culture in historically underrepresented neighborhoods.

Key Takeaway: Turnout NYC should remain hyperlocal. Artists and audiences enjoyed performances in their neighborhoods, with programming that is relevant to their culture.

Equitable Distribution. Turnout NYC focused on neighborhoods with a low concentration of cultural institutions. Organizations and artists in such neighborhoods felt both surprised and appreciative for being included.

- BCJC realized that culture abounds in Brownsville and can thrive independently from traditional cultural venues such as museums and theaters. Similarly, The Point CDC learned that its neighbors are eager for local art and will include more of it in future programming.
- Artists connected with new audiences and gained exposure without leaving their communities. Turnout NYC showcased artists from underrepresented groups and disciplines. Programming included spoken word and hip-hop in Brownsville, Queer Mexican folk dancers in Staten Island, Southern Filipino indigenous traditional storytelling in Queens, a fashion show with Harlem-based models and designers, and a female-led graffiti collective in the Bronx.

Black and Hispanic/Latin artists were greatly represented



Cultural Representation. The neighborhoods that hosted Turnout NYC are home to people from racial minorities and non-mainstream artists. One artist perceived SITU/Design Trust's process of addressing racial disparities as authentic and not tokenizing. Turnout NYC did not target specific demographics but worked with historically disenfranchised neighborhoods.

- As an effort to support local artists, Turnout NYC was able to support a large number of Black and Hispanic/Latin artists. Overall, Turnout's demographics are similar to the NYC's 2020 census but with greater representation from minority groups.
- Female artists were well represented, and artists of diverse ages, sexualities, and abilities performed at Turnout NYC. Each borough showcased different cultures based on local history and demographics.
- Turnout NYC served a diversity of age groups, ranging from artists born in 1940 to artists born after the year 2000.
- Of forty-nine artists who answered the survey, nine identified as having a disability. We asked if people wanted to specify their disability, and people selected mobility, temporary, mental health, long-term medical issues, learning disability/neurodivergence, or preferred not to specify.



Inter-generational Graffiti Event at Turnout Bronx

Diverse Audiences. Audiences were intergenerational, friendly, enthusiastic, and engaged. CCPs received very positive feedback from residents, and many residents were upset when the stage left their neighborhood.

- Turnout events felt welcoming and created a sense of community. People generally felt happy, friendly, and welcome at Turnout events in a way that one interviewee noted differed from any other public events they had attended in the city.
- The openness and visibility of Turnout NYC invited passersby to stay and helped CCPs and performers reach new audiences.
- CCPs and artists noticed that most spectators would stay for the whole day of programming and return to the following events.
- Turnout NYC allowed for intergenerational connections. Older people attended and stayed the whole time because of the accessibility of the space. During this time, they enjoyed artists of all ages, including young and senior performers.
- For artists, it was great to see people who would not normally frequent cultural events. One artist felt accomplished about creating a welcoming dance floor, able to reach an unhoused dancer who joined from a distance.



Cultivation Event at Turnout Queens

Case Study Staten Island

Staten Island only has a handful of museums and performance spaces. This deficit gets exacerbated with citywide programming that often excludes Staten Island. For this reason, CCPs, artists, and audiences appreciated being included in Turnout NYC. With guidance from Staten Island Arts Council, Turnout NYC identified only a handful of candidates and partnered with Alice Austen House as the CCP.

Thanks to Turnout NYC, the CCP self-declared being able to host ten times more programming than usual. They were also able to expand into new audiences. For example, neighbors visited the space for the first time but became regular attendees. From June 3rd to July 10th, 2022, the Alice Austen House counted a total of 1,871 visitors, with most events attracting 30-50 people and 100-150 attendees to larger events. One could see audiences arrive early to set up and stay throughout the entire performance. Some people brought camping chairs to secure a seat. The most popular events were specifically curated for the Black, Hispanic/Latin, and/or LGBTQ+ communities. One artist stated that Turnout NYC proved the need for cultural venues in Staten Island.

Turnout NYC allowed local artists to connect with their community instead of leaving to find work. Thanks to their newly created audiences, artists felt that their art was appreciated. Alice Austen House created space for poets every Tuesday. One Staten Island-based poet shared how Turnout NYC helped him and others revisit preconceptions about their Borough, which people didn't normally associate with arts. Those poets felt appreciated by audiences who consistently attended, with at least forty people per event and eighty people for the final open mic event. One poet noted how Turnout NYC built community and applauded the collaborative nature of the initiative.

Goal Three: Give arts organizations, artists, and community leaders greater agency in defining programming and curatorial practice.

Key Takeaway: CCPs felt enough agency and flexibility while still receiving the needed support.

Balance between freedom and support. For this 2022 pilot, Turnout NYC provided CCPs with physical Kits, financial support, insurance, site design services, and some marketing & promotion. Each CCP was responsible for the curation and programming of the Kit in their space and any additional marketing.

- CCPs liked the style of open communication that the Design Trust and SITU used, and CCPs felt like valued team members. One CCP that was a new relationship for the Design Trust had some issues initially, feeling untrusted during the initial budget process. However, this got resolved as trust built up as the project advanced.
- All CCPs noted that significant issues arose with insurance and distributing payments. CCPs did not have the administrative capacity to handle these duties, and Turnout NYC should provide much more support if this is done again. Perhaps insurance could be integrated in a similar way as Turnout NYC provided technical assistance for permitting.
- Turnout NYC allowed artists to explore and express themselves in multiple media instead of marketing themselves as single-sided creatives. One artist had the opportunity to work as a composer and not just a performer, which they noted as a rare opportunity. After Turnout NYC, they got another commission as a composer.
- Both the Storytelling Fellow and the photographer enjoyed having full creative control. They were allowed to choose their own projects and reach out to CCPs and artists. They felt trusted, supported with conceptual feedback, and a part of the Turnout team the entire time.

Community-based programming. CCPs curated all the programming and could showcase local artists, produce performances relevant to their communities, and advance each organization's mission.

- Turnout NYC expanded many CCP's capacity for programming, and CCPs programmed for a wide variety of events. From a city-wide perspective, Turnout's programming shows great diversity. From a local perspective, the programming corresponds to the priorities of each organization and the communities they serve. For example, Alice Austen House had abundant programming with and for LGBTQ+ groups in Staten Island, while Queens showcased various cultural expressions from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- The partnership model, in which CCPs were responsible for programming alone, shows promise, but CCPs needed administrative and financial support. Future iterations of Turnout NYC should be better able to assess the capacity required for CCPs to produce programming and whether Turnout NYC can help meet the capacity gaps in other ways. All CCPs struggled with the administration of artists' payments. One support that was appreciated was an invoicing template for artists that the Design Trust created and CCPs shared with artists.



Nicole Ohr, Tap Dance at Turnout Queens

Case Study Queens

For the Queensboro Dance Festival (QDF), the Queens CCP, Turnout NYC was very successful and something “that wouldn’t have been possible without the support and freedom to take agency over the project, agency over the vision, and bounce ideas off of the Design Trust team.”

For QDF, Turnout NYC introduced revolutionary models for collaboration, funding streams, and activating public spaces by working with organizations in their communities. Turnout’s model strengthened local organizations by connecting them through a city-wide initiative. QDF exchanged knowledge with other CCPs but wants more consistent meetings with other CCPs.

After a decade of experience activating public spaces in their borough, Queensboro Dance Festival expanded programming beyond dance. Thanks to Turnout NYC, they were able to offer an exciting array of events for the local community. QDF also expanded their network, exposure, and capacity for producing larger events. Working in Travers Park deepened their relationship with community organizations and neighbors. For example, programming in Queens included events by the Jackson Heights Beautification group and the local Community Fridge. In addition, QDF tried to integrate ASL for students from a local School for the Deaf and to elevate a concurrent community mural project at the park.

To further expand the QDF’s network, The Design Trust organized a cultivation event with government authorities and potential funders. After Turnout NYC, QDF’s Director feels better equipped and more confident to work with large partners and more impactful projects. She also understands better what to request from city authorities.

Regarding curation for 2022, QDF led artists’ outreach and collective visioning for programming. QDF’s Director felt positively challenged to brainstorm with artists to design performances that take advantage of the Kit-of-Parts and its unique features.

QDF greatly appreciated the administrative support from The Design Trust, specifically supporting invoicing, billing, and payments for multiple artists. QDF didn’t have the proper staff or fiscal status to process dozens of individual payments. Insurance was another administrative challenge for most CCPs. Queensboro Dance Festival was better equipped on this front, due to the nature of the organization, QDF’s insurance policy was already set up for public space activations, and they were able to add temporary protection for Travers Park. Other CCPs learned from QDF’s experience in this area but still recommend that Turnout NYC includes coverage as part of the soft infrastructure.

Goal Four: Cultivate the professional development of local artists, technicians, and organizations.

Key Takeaway: CCPs and artists expanded their network and want to continue strengthening it. In terms of support, CCPs may care more about administrative support, while artists may care more about increasing promotional support and opportunities.

Leadership Development. The Turnout model enabled community cultural partners to flex their existing capacity and provided them with needed support for growth.

- For many CCPs, Turnout NYC was a game changer that allowed them to expand their network, grow their capacity for programming & administration, prove that they can work with larger partners, raise their reputation with city officials, learn how to deal with financial management, and maintain an increased amount of programming even once the project ended. One CCP compared the Turnout experience to a leadership fellowship. Another CCP secured a new funding opportunity from New York State and attributed their success to Turnout NYC.
- Multiple CCPs established or strengthened their connections with city agencies and gained knowledge on permitting and standard procedures.
- For CCPs, Turnout's highlight was compensating artists adequately and equitably. Funding focused 70% on paying artists and 30% on CCP's staffing. While they appreciated being able to pay artists, multiple CCPs struggled to cover their organizations' overhead and operating costs with their share of the funding.



Kit operation training at Turnout Harlem

Expanded Network. Turnout NYC created a network to guide the project and to support CCPs and artists. CCPs achieved new and/or stronger relationships with local organizations, larger organizations, and their local artist communities. This network has a great potential that was not fully explored.

- CCPs learned from each other, and felt that Turnout NYC integrated their shared needs. Early on, Queens' CCP learned and replicated Staten Island's idea to hire a photographer to document all events. Turnout NYC hired a photographer to help document the other sites. Regarding insurance, the Bronx and Queens exchanged concerns, recommendations, and providers.
- One CCP had a renewed interest from volunteers, particularly young people, because of Turnout NYC.
- CCPs wanted to be better connected to each other and funders. CCPs would like Mellon to have a more direct, reciprocal relationship with them. CCPs appreciated connecting with each Turnout NYC location and now want more opportunities to exchange knowledge, share resources, and coordinate Turnout NYC events.
- Artists also suggested a stronger citywide Turnout brand so they can better connect across the network. Artists want to use the Turnout network to exchange promotion and learnings.
- Stakeholders agreed with the CCP selection process that SITU and Design Trust used. They believe choosing from SITU and Design Trust's current network was more equitable than an open call or a Request for Proposals (RFP). However, this method could be more equitable if the Design Trust made a greater effort to expand their network.



Members of the Turnout Team at Design Trust's Restorative City Convening

Opportunities for Growth. Artists and Cultural Partners had the freedom and support to expand their leadership and creativity. They furthered existing responsibilities and explored new roles and/or media.

- From the artists' survey, we know that newer artists gained exposure through Turnout NYC and can now claim that they have performed publicly. The Bronx and Brownsville programming included career-building workshops for new artists and local youth.
- CCPs and artists with a longer trajectory also had new learnings. Artists felt challenged to grow and free to explore new media. For example, one artist who typically works as a performer showed his talent as a composer. This same artist appreciated the unprecedented creative freedom. An arts instructor had the opportunity to put on a one-hour workshop, the longest they had ever done.
- Multiple artists felt that the nature of public space kept them creatively active before and during their performances. Artists noted that the unique stage modules allowed them to think of new improvisations and ways to structure their performances instead of the usual single flat stage.
- CCPs tested new ways to use public space, even if they have used those same spaces many times. One CCP learned how to better program their space, specifically that they should be hosting events on the edges of the space rather than in the middle to facilitate more welcoming performances.



That House Party Tho Concert at Turnout Brownsville, Brooklyn

Case Study Bronx

In the Bronx, Turnout NYC partnered with The Point CDC. This Cultural Partner focused most of their programming on intergenerational learning. For example, they held weekday workshops through which teaching artists prepared younger peers to perform on the weekends. The Point CDC celebrated how Turnout NYC enabled peer-to-peer learning, brought exposure for artists, and put artists in direct relationship with their community.

Some artists appreciated returning to Hunter's Point to share their craft and experience. One artist got their start in poetry a long time ago, through youth slams at The Point CDC, and came back to teach and perform. Another artist who started as an apprentice years ago got to produce a whole set for Turnout NYC.

Staff from the Point CDC applaud giving organizations the resources to ignite public spaces with art and pay artists fairly. They are glad they got to help local artists and provide a service to the community that otherwise would not exist.

Unable to get the insurance for activating public space, the Point CDC used their front yard and discovered the potential of this space. According to the Point CDC, Turnout NYC ignited that space and the desire for local culture from the community. Now, they feel prompted to address that desire.

During September 2022, the Turnout workshops in the Bronx had lower attendance because kids were back in school. In 2023, the Bronx used the Kit again, but during the summer season and with their own funding. SITU instructed The Point how to operate the Kit and to maintain it during the cold season. As the steward of the traveling Kit, they will continue to use it for local arts.

Goal Five: Demonstrate a scalable strategy to transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant cultural venues.

Key Takeaway: Turnout NYC is uniquely positioned to continue making arts and culture more equitable and accessible.

Site-agnostic design for hyper-local programming. Turnout NYC proved successful in a diversity of spaces and was able to support CCPs with varied capacities and experiences.

- Both the Kit and administrative support were able to adapt and serve diverse Community Partners and cultural programs in all five boroughs.
- Most CCPs kept the stage and Kit components in place for use by the public outside of events, and the community used it for a variety of purposes, from eating lunch to hosting school gatherings.
- As proof of the Kit's flexibility for both performances and community life, multiple CCPs recommended creating five Kits, one to travel around each borough. They think the Kit could be based in a designated public space during the off-season and travel around the borough during the warm-weather season.

Relevant solution for arts and public space sectors. Turnout NYC confirmed the need for accessible cultural venues and their potential to activate public spaces. Local talent abounds in underserved areas despite the scarcity of cultural institutions.

- CCPs would like to be part of Turnout NYC again. The two CCPs who are stewarding the two Kits-of-Parts have been using them during the off-season, and they activated the Kits in the summer of 2023.
- All CCPs have expressed a need for support in cultural administration and the promotion of artists. If Turnout NYC happens again, they would like this type of support again and with greater strength.
- Other arts and/or place-based organizations showed strong interest in accessing Turnout's infrastructure to support their programming.
- NYC staff has been supportive and excited about Turnout NYC in all locations. DOT staff and the Chief Public Realm Officer also want Turnout NYC to continue and have expressed their support.

Unique position to make much needed changes. After a year of work and collaboration, Turnout NYC has created a strong network of arts advocates from various sectors. They all carry the learnings and conviction to support hyperlocal arts and culture.

- Artists and CCPs felt positively challenged to be creative with the Kit, its local programming, and the surprise element of a public performance.
- Turnout's program met a need to support and encourage artists who typically get underpaid and even unpaid. CCPs were able to include new types of performances and disciplines.
- Turnout's design could inform other programs in the public realm. At the Design Trust, it is already informing other projects. For example, learnings from Turnout NYC helped inform recommendations for the Open Restaurant program with designs that can be moved, stored overnight, and support multiple uses.
- Stakeholders appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback before, during, and after the process. They said this type of collaboration is atypical and helped shape a more thorough initiative.



“Learn to Love Yourself” Silent Disco at Turnout Manhattan

Case Study Manhattan

Turnout's Harlem location was initially considered the most challenging one. The space is located in an underutilized plaza under Metro-North tracks. It has constant and very loud noise from the train and a transient population of commuters and unhoused New Yorkers. Such conditions have challenged past cultural activations. At this site, Turnout NYC worked with Uptown Grand Central as the Cultural Community Partner (CCP) and the National Black Theater for additional support.

The Kit-of-Parts was flexible enough to support programming even in this most challenging space. Turnout's partnership model also demonstrated its adaptability. In Harlem, Uptown Grand Central collaborated with the National Black Theatre to design site-specific cultural programming. Together, they created a four-part event series titled "Learn to Love Yourself: Silent Disco & Portrait Series" and included five original soundscapes composed by different artists with the prompt of promoting self-love. Photographers and a set designer were commissioned to produce a portrait booth, inviting audiences to have a more loving relationship with their image. During the summer of 2023, 125th Street Plaza became a vibrant, welcoming dance floor, and Timeout NYC ranked it as one of the 10 best things to do in New York City.

In Harlem Turnout NYC has already scaled or grown its impact beyond the 2022 season. First, it sponsored a permanent light installation that brightens this otherwise dark space. Secondly, it strengthened the CCP's qualifications to win New York State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative, a grant for economic development. Today, The Department of Transportation (DOT) owns the space and celebrates that the space is active, and they use it more for their public programs. At the end of Turnout Harlem, DOT sponsored a night circus.

The Future

Propositions for the Future

Based on the evaluation of the work to date and on key conversations with external stakeholders, the Turnout NYC team has developed a framework for a long-term vision of the Turnout NYC initiative. While still adaptable, this vision is based on the original goals and the confidence that Turnout NYC is uniquely positioned to inform sustainable ways to support hyperlocal arts in New York City.

Separately, the city has strong momentum to reimagine how our public spaces serve New Yorkers. Many of the lessons from Turnout NYC have a strong bearing on many of these decisions, including the design of flexible public realm furniture, more flexible permitting and insurance, collective models of public realm governance, and the inclusion of the arts in more ways.

Turnout's innovations could inform many future directions. The team has identified three core principles to accommodate these diverse futures. These principles reflect the viewpoints of the Artist Advisory Council, the Community Cultural Partners, and other stakeholders.



Open Mic at Turnout Brownsville

Principle One:

Continue to build and strengthen NYC's network of underrepresented artists and place-based arts organizations to serve as a collective form of leadership.

Distributed agency was critical to project success. Turnout NYC proved that empowering local organizations and artists not only ensures an equitable distribution of resources across the city but also creates opportunities for leadership at the local level and cultivates deeply resonant local curatorial practices.

- Find ways to represent diverse and contemporary artistic perspectives. Turnout's Advisory Council served as the north star for the project, ensuring that the distribution of resources aligned with the project goals. The council also helped us stay relevant to the present and future of NYC-based artists, especially those who are not typically included.
- Lean into local and borough-based organizations as stewards of cultural programming. For example, each borough-based Arts Council could manage and maintain public infrastructure, to be shared amongst cultural partners in the area.
- Keep consistent support for both cultural and place-based organizations. For example, through an annual grant that integrates funding, infrastructure, and administrative support.
- Give creative freedom to local organizations and artists. Cultural partners should be fully responsible for the curatorial strategy, establishing artist relationships, and event production.
- Open the public infrastructure to other artists. For example, artists can book the physical space through a map and/or calendar with the available sites and dates.

Principle Two:

Combine public and private strengths to draw from the resources and authority of the City government while preserving the flexibility necessary to deliver projects efficiently in complicated public spaces.

This model could draw from existing ones, such as the City Park Foundation and Central Park Conservancy, integrating established and proven practices within public realm management.

- Bridge between larger donors and smaller arts organizations and artists, who often face enormous barriers in finding and accepting funds to support their work despite philanthropic interest.
- Dedicate resources to broaden access to flexible arts infrastructure. For example, secure committed seed funding from a public entity or foundation.
- Explore revenue-generating opportunities through sponsorship, grants, and other partnerships.
- Continue to create a new model of inclusive arts programming in the public realm. Tap into other current public realm opportunities, such as New York's Open Culture, Open Streets, and Open Restaurants. All of which could help activate public spaces such as streets, plazas, and parks.

Principle Three:

Consolidate the “Kit” as a package of physical, organizational, and financial support.

In addition to the physical infrastructure (stages, AV equipment, seating, signage), financial and administrative resources (permitting assistance, site design expertise, insurance clearinghouse, and technical support) are also needed to support the program, as well as manuals and tutorials for capacity-building.

- The Kit-of-Parts could include a tested mixture of physical infrastructure, financial support, insurance, and site design services. These Kits can be deployed to several places in each performance season.
- Support each season with coordinated, city-wide marketing and promotion, supplementing local efforts.
- Offer, at a subsidized or free rental rate, a range of public performance equipment for local organizations. The Kits would also come with detailed tutorials and assistance in securing the necessary permits, approvals, insurance, security, and other administrative needs.
- Build and maintain multiple Kits, at least one per borough, to be shared amongst cultural partners.

Credits and Acknowledgments

Leadership

SITU - Basar Girit, Brad Samuels, Katie Shima, Johnathon Smith, Amanda Sarantos

Design Trust for Public Space - Matthew Clarke, Akemi Sato, Alexa Mauzy-Lewis, Patricia Argueta-Medina, Journey Harris, Natalie Roach

Fellow and Consultants

Storytelling Fellow - Natalie Romero-Marx

Public Space Design Advisor - Julie Ember, J. Ember Design

Evaluation Consultant - Susannah Laramée Kid

Graphic Design Support - Alfalfa Studio

Acoustic and Audiovisual Support - LSTN Consultants

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Artist Advisory Council

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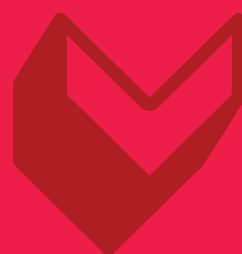
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