



North Brooklyn Open Streets Community Coalition

Statement at Brooklyn Community Board 1's December Transportation Committee Meeting December 1, 2020

How we began.

After a month of barriers being routinely destroyed and out on the street with next to zero signage, the founding members of the coalition came together to support the DOT's program.

The North Brooklyn Open Streets Community Coalition actively facilitates open streets on Berry. St, Nassau, Russell, and Driggs. When needed, our volunteers support West St., Grand St., and Sharron St.

Since June 2020, we have publicly advertised a website, twitter, instagram, open email address, a volunteer form, and a feedback / barrier damage form. You can find all of this at < <https://nbkos.cc> >.

The New York Post, Streetsblog, and Greenpointers have reported on our work. Representatives have testified in front of the City Council.

This coalition consists of neighbors and the following organizations and elected officials: North Brooklyn Neighbors, Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, Transportation Alternatives and Transportation Alternative's North Brooklyn Committee, North Brooklyn Mutual Aid and their North Brooklyn Stewards program, BetaNYC, North Brooklyn Parks Alliance, El Punte, Park Church Co-Op, Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Stephen Levin.

How the coalition is organized.

The coalition is broken up into four pods.

- Berry / Nassau, volunteers who walk the streets around 8 am and 8 pm, resetting barriers and providing light, on the spot maintenance.
- Driggs / Russell, volunteers who set up and take down barriers at 8 am and 8 pm.
- Barrier Builders who refurbish legs, barriers, etc.
- A captains pod manages the other three.

We have a comprehensive list of volunteers who are out in the street at various shifts. There is a list-serve of all volunteers and coalition representatives. We meet about once a month to discuss issues, meet with various government agencies, and help each other out.

The North Brooklyn Open Streets Community Coalition is part of a broader city-wide coalition that is organized by Transportation Alternatives and has bi-monthly meetings.

First, I would like to thank our 100+ volunteers who live on or near Driggs, Russell, Barry, or Nassau. For the past five months, we have experienced routine harassment. We've been called communists, foreigners, cult members, and have been told to "go back to our country." Some have threatened harm as we set up open street barriers, and I have been nearly hit while setting up barricades.

Second, I would like to thank Kyle Gorman and his team at the DOT for helping us get official open street signage, and I would like to thank Capt Fahey of the 94th Precinct. Capt Fahey helped replace Barry St's barriers when a vandal stole a half-mile of barricades. The Capt has been instrumental in getting us replacement legs. Currently, we are waiting for 46 new legs across all of North Brooklyn's open streets.

Our community members have worked with the NYPD, the DOT, Sanitation, and businesses on open streets to address specific public space issues.

The coalition has been self-funded. BetaNYC, which is a partner project of the Fund for the City of New York, has provided technology and logistical support. BetaNYC contributed \$2,000 in operational funds to purchase supplies and equipment. Several members have contributed personal funds or resources to acquire rope, screws, or make laminated signs. Some have donated painting equipment, paint, and one member went out of their way to build new barricades.

To date, we have mended over 150 legs and fielded 100 barrier service requests.

The future

After five months of volunteering, we launched a petition asking the Mayor and the DOT to make four open streets segments permanent. To date, we have 1180 signers with 576 notes of support. In the past week, 55 people have added their names to support Cooper Park's open street.

Successful Open Streets have created a safe refuge through the pandemic. We have witnessed pedestrians, children, neighbors with mobility assistive devices, cyclists, and families enjoy a public space without excessive cars, noise, or danger.

Berry Street has flourished as a non-commercialized public space, reductions around McGolrick Park have brought sanity and safe spaces to exercise.

North Brooklyn's open streets have thrived due to our neighborhood volunteers stewarding these public spaces.

To improve this program, our petition is asking for the following:

- A public commitment to continue this program into the Summer of 2021.
- Community stakeholder meetings to make Berry, Driggs, Nassau, and Russell permanent open streets.
- Provide financial and material resources for the continued maintenance and logistics of a volunteer-led open streets program.

Additionally, we are calling on the City to permanently remove through traffic to ensure a quiet and safe neighborhood. To best do this, we suggest the following strategies:

- On every other block, alternate the direction of traffic on Berry and Driggs.
- Convert the Meeker/Driggs/Morgan Ave island into a plaza
- Large detour signs and planters at major intersections informing drivers these are no longer through streets.

We look forward to working with you to make our neighborhood safe, quiet, and accessible to all.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Noel Hidalgo

Co-founder and co-organizer of North Brooklyn Open Streets Community Coalition

nbk.oscc@gmail.com

Survey Data:*

Positive responses: 1025

Negative responses: 4

NYC responses: 1018

NBK zip code responses: 914

Brooklyn CB 1 responses: 886

Responses within 0.25 of an open street (NBK zips): 748

Responses within 0.25 of an open street (Bk CB1): 735 (71.7%)

* Petition data was analysed prior to comments being written.

Statistics:

Overall CB 1 Non-Car ownership: Households who don't own a car 49,441 (67%)

Overall CB 1 Car ownership in CB 1: Households who own 1+ car 24380 (33%)

Estimated number of cars based on 2018 census data: 27,967

Total number of car parking spots: TBD

Overall curb miles in Brooklyn Community Board 1: 140.8 miles

Curb miles dedicated to:

- Alternate Side Parking: 130.6 miles
- Metered Parking: 2.1 miles
- Commercial/Truck Parking: 2.1 miles
- Open Streets curb space in Brooklyn Community Board 1: 4.15 miles
- Open Streets on Berry, Nassau, Driggs, and Russell: 3.12 miles

The open street segments on Berry, Driggs, Nassau, and Russell are 2.21% of total curb miles in Brooklyn Community Board 1.

Parks Green Space: 124.6 acres

Concrete Space: TBD

<https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/2246/housing>