

EXCHANGE  
**PLACE**  
ALLIANCE

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**2020**  
ANNUAL REPORT





## Letter from our Executive Director



It is a privilege to share with you this 2020 annual report of the Exchange Place Alliance Special Improvement District. The Exchange Place Alliance SID represents our business and commercial property stakeholders, who are invested in the economic vitality and success of the Exchange Place SID.

The Exchange Place Alliance has a mandate from its varied stakeholders and partners in Jersey City government to utilize your tax dollars efficiently and effectively in order to have a positive impact on all facets of life within our district. Though this year has presented its unique challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Exchange Place Alliance has pressed forward on a variety of fronts in order to improve the quality of life and overall experience within our district. We are excited to outline these efforts in this report. We appreciate your support and collaboration in our continued mission. Thank you.



# SMALL BUSINESSES AND STATISTICS

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AVG. WEEKLY WAGES  
**\$1,550**

**143%**

**17,000**

MED. FAMILY INCOME  
**\$204,500**

**9,609** UNITS

**2,014**  
OWNER-  
OCCUPIED



**6,345**  
RENTER-  
OCCUPIED

**1,250** VACANT

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Despite a challenging operating environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we observed more small business openings than closures over 2020. This past year, we welcomed the acclaimed fried chicken and Southern food Bobwhite Counter to its new location at Portside Towers on Warren Street. We also welcomed Sweetgreen into 90 Hudson Street, which specializes in quick service healthy food options and salads. Also new to the district is & pizza in 30 Montgomery Street and East Hana JC, which serves Japanese cuisine. Finally, Yaso TangBao, the well-known dumpling and dim sum restaurant, opened in 30 Hudson Street toward the end of the year. This past year, the show-tunes bar and restaurant Pianist Envy closed its doors along with Nukkad. Gotham Deli on Montgomery Street also closed during this past year.

A recent analysis of the Bergen-Hudson-Passaic area by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the unemployment rate in Hudson County increased by 143% between December 2019 and December 2020. This exceeds the 91% increase nationally during the same time period, but still falls short of the 127% increases in unemployment in Passaic County over the same time period. Average weekly wages in Hudson County in the second quarter of 2020 were \$1,550 whereas the U.S. average over the same period was \$1,188.

According to the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, just over 17,000 people live within our district with an average estimated 2020 median family income of \$204,500. There are 9,609 units of housing within our district, with 2,014 of them being owner-occupied. 6,345 units are renter-occupied, while 1,250 remain vacant.



# DISTRICT MAINTENANCE & UPKEEP

This past year the Clean Team continued to offer a robust array of supplemental sanitation services in order to beautify and improve the district. The Clean Team works seven days per week from 6:00 AM - 8:00 PM during the warm months of May-September and from 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM for the colder, off-season months of October-April. In 2020, the Clean Team put in just shy of **10,000 labor hours** into our district. They removed **13,525 bags of trash** out of our district, amounting to roughly **473,375 pounds of trash**. The Clean Team also removed **917 instances of posters and stickers** along with **511 instances of graffiti**.

In the springtime, the Clean Team took extra steps to respond to the unique conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic by sanitizing every piece of street furniture that people interact with, including benches, chairs, and trash receptacles throughout the district. This year we also worked closely with a number of commercial property owners to deep clean their sidewalks and street surfaces where mobile food vendors operate. This helped to clean the grease and grime that is a byproduct of the mobile food vendor operation.





## SNOW REMOVAL + LANDSCAPING

In 2020, our SID continued to provide snow and ice removal services to our district in order to ensure pedestrian safety and safe passage. Our snow team will always be on site for a snow event and also ensures that freezing rain and ice conditions are mitigated.

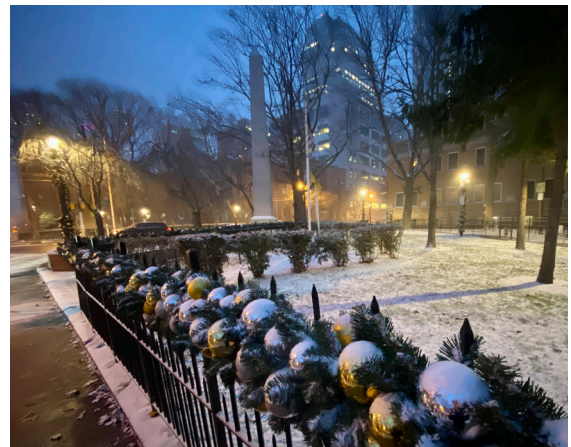
When the weather was warmer, the Alliance continued to expand the landscaping beautification program. In order to ensure that the district looked in top shape through the year. The Alliance made a strategic shift in 2020 to contract with a different landscaper than we previously worked with in order to grow with us as our projects become more complex. We were able to add a number of additional landscaping sites this year

including the planters along Montgomery Street and planters at the southern terminus of Warren Street, near the Liberty Landing Ferry. These additional sites have been a great success and have helped to bring added greenery to their respective streetscapes.



## HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

This past year we also switched over to a new holiday decorations contractor who will also be able to grow with our visions for an expanded holiday presence throughout the district. We were thrilled to see the installation of our 30-foot sequoia tree adorned with 20,000 warm-white LED lights on J. Owen Grundy Pier. Complimenting this were railing lights that surrounded the pier and a large portion of the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway. This year we also wrapped light poles along the river and in Exchange Place with beautiful gold and silver garland. We were also able to expand our decorations into Paulus Hook Park, where we lined the historic iron fencing with garland and wrapped the light poles throughout the site.





# MAJOR PROJECTS

## Paulus Hook Park

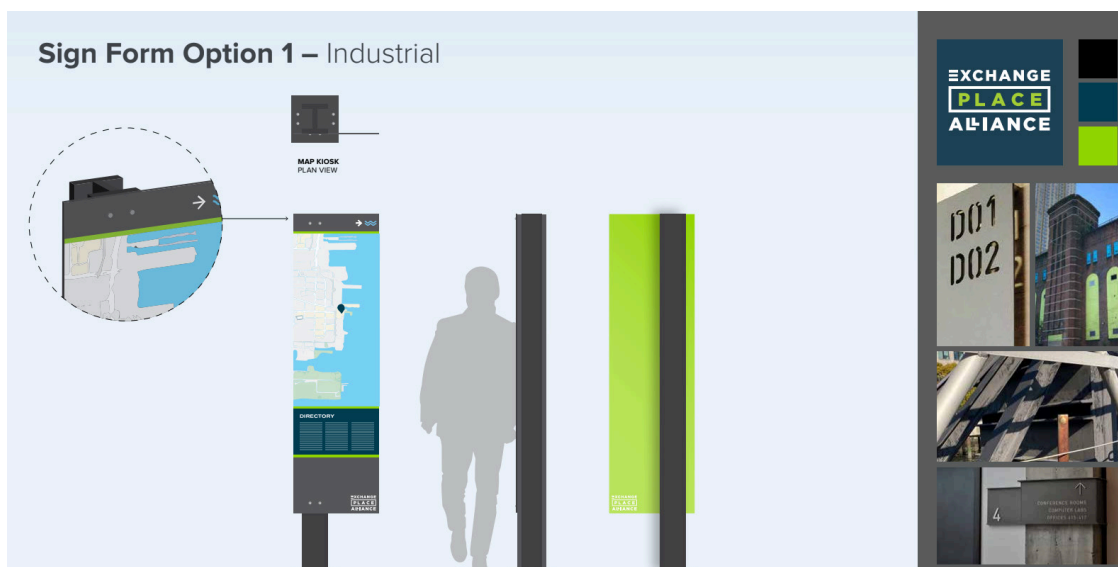
Rehabilitation work for Paulus Hook Park broke ground on May 5th, 2020 starting first with landscaping and weeding. Throughout the summer, we were able to make progress on a variety of fronts. The crew excavated the South West corner in order to make a large planting bed. Following this, they installed two playgrounds within the same lot. Next, our crews replaced all of the broken lighting within the park's four quadrants with colonial-style LED fixtures. Once this was completed, crews worked to replace large sections of broken concrete sidewalk adjacent to the P.S. 16 lot and also install concrete ADA ramps into the P.S. 16 lot on both Grand and Washington Streets. We were also able to fully remove the double fence at this lot and replace it with a strong and stable commercial-grade steel fence. Our work also included removing the interior iron fencing on the other three quadrants of the park in order to open up this underutilized space for the public's enjoyment. Finally, the asphalt on the P.S. 16 lot was sealcoated and new trees were planted on the exterior sidewalks throughout the site. More exciting work is coming down the pipeline for this park in 2021, which will be detailed more at the end of this report.

## **Mobile Food Vendors**

Throughout this past year, we have worked closely with the City of Jersey City and the Municipal Council to craft new mobile food vendor regulations for Jersey City. In September 2020, the Jersey City Municipal Council passed the final Ordinance 20-063, which establishes streamlined regulations for mobile food vendors operating throughout the City and within our special improvement district. Specifically, this ordinance creates designated mobile food vendor parking spots within our district on Christopher Columbus Drive, Montgomery Street, and Sussex Street. These designated spots, denoted in the Zone 1 section within the ordinance, require the issuance of a permit before operating within the parking spot. Mobile food vendors are prohibited from parking in any spot that has not been previously designated as a mobile food vendor parking spot. This will help to ensure the presence of a diverse, well-qualified, and vetted array of mobile food vendors. After the successful passage of this ordinance, we worked with the City's Business Administrator's office to select mobile food vendors to operate within the designated spots in our special improvement district. This is a major step forward for mobile food vendor policy for us, as it allows us to simultaneously tend to the unique characteristics and concerns of our brick and mortar food establishments while bringing in other types of cuisine into the district that may not otherwise be available.

## **Wayfinding and Orienteering System**

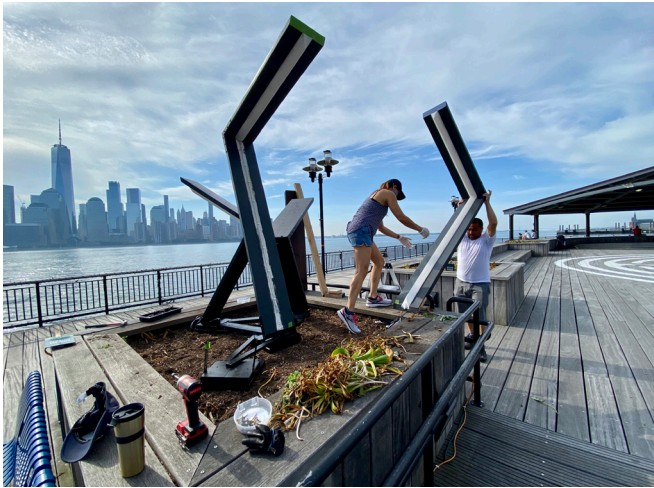
The Alliance has continued to work with Two Twelve, a Jersey City-owned graphics and wayfinding design company, to reimagine the waterfront's wayfinding signage and directional orienteering systems. This first included a needs assessment, where the design team analyzed the district, its traffic patterns, and its existing orienteering signage to help inform their recommendations on how to best provide a full, wrap-around wayfinding experience, whether by foot, vehicle, bicycle, or otherwise. This work included the design of branded banners to be placed throughout the district at strategic locations, reviewing schematic design options for new map kiosks and infrastructure, approving a single schematic design option, and collaborating on content for an interactive feature to help guide visitors through key areas of the district. We decided to feature this community's many layers of history and industry, and are working with Two Twelve to create content for various points of interest throughout our district. Our goal is to invite the exploration of our district, by prompting visitors to stop by each sign location to learn about its history (i.e., the story behind the Colgate Clock). Two Twelve's work also includes building out a system of signage for our public art program to help standardize what visitors throughout the district see when they interact with various types of projects we spearhead.





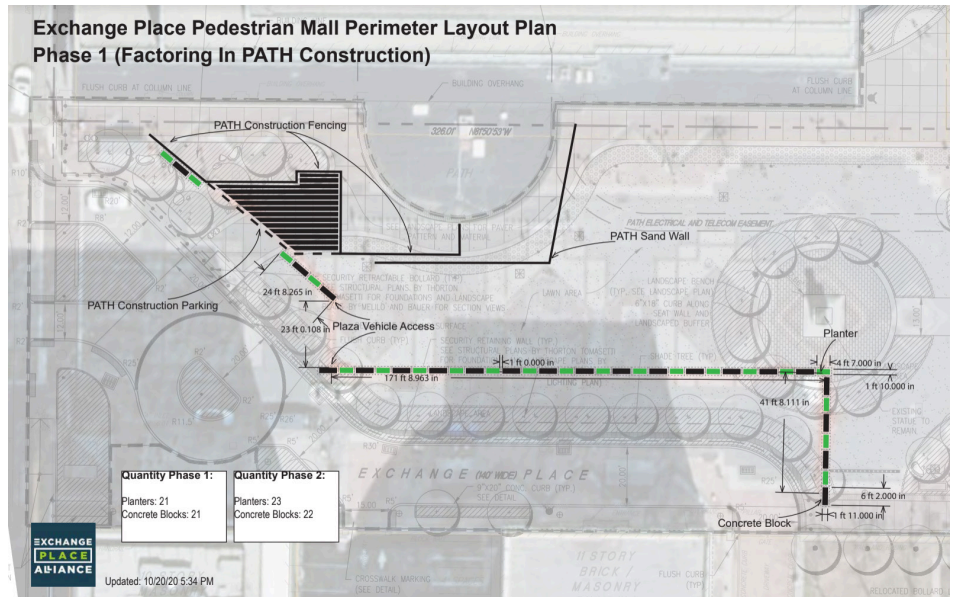
## Public Art Installations

Another way we believe our community can be enjoyed is through the installation of a broad collection of public art displays. This program serves to beautify our district and guides visitors along to each location via our public walking tour that can either be done virtually via our website or in person. In 2020, we were able to add the following installations to our growing collection: Quarantine in May, Thomas Wilson; Instagram Plant Photography, Deirdre Newman; Shattered, Raphael Pangilinan. We will continue to grow this program and enhance it with tools to connect the audience with the space and artist.



## Exchange Place Pedestrian Mall

This year we have also been working closely with the City on the conversion of the terminus of Montgomery Street and Christopher Columbus Drive into a Pedestrian plaza and eventually the construction of a new open, public park on this site. In September 2020, the Jersey City Municipal Council passed the final ordinance implementing the Exchange Place Pedestrian Mall. This is a major step forward for the Alliance as we will now be able to close this site to vehicular traffic and activate the area for pedestrian use. The new pedestrian mall will enhance the movement, safety, convenience, and enjoyment of pedestrians and the public at large. It will also support the local economy and support the patronage of local businesses and foster more frequent cultural and social exchanges in our community. This site will be a unique asset for Jersey City and will serve as a continued destination for residents and visitors and will become a highlight attraction for Jersey City.





## **+ JCPD Off Duty Patrols**

As the warm season and lockdown began this year, the Alliance experienced a unique and evolving set of challenges for the district centered around public safety. We observed an increase in noise complaints, unsanctioned fireworks, overnight loitering, overnight litter and trash, and at one point, an isolated case of violence along the waterfront within our district. The external events of the past few months produced a marked uptick in activity regarding the safety and quality of life within the district. We closely monitored constituent complaints and worked in tandem with the Jersey City Department of Public Safety to mitigate some of these public safety concerns. We believe that a more targeted approach to public safety within the district both supported ongoing efforts by JCPD East District and amplified the impact on the community. The Alliance and other key stakeholders within the district reached an agreement to collectively utilize the JCPD Off-Duty Employment program to mitigate these issues. Uniformed officers patrolled targeted areas of the waterfront designated by the Alliance and directly addressed public safety concerns quickly and efficiently. The Alliance utilized four police officers on Wednesday-Saturday nights. On Wednesday and Thursday nights, the officers patrolled from 8:00 PM to 2:00 AM and on Friday and Saturday nights, the officers patrolled from 8:00 PM to 4:00 AM.

## **+ Grand Street Cobblestone Repair**

One of our other projects this year focused on resetting the cobblestones at the end of Grand Street near the 9/11 memorial. Over time, these cobblestones became loose due to car traffic and snow plows. We put this project out to bid and selected the contractor who we felt would best complete this work. Now, the terminus of Grand Street is back in top condition.



# LOOKING FORWARD FOR 2021

In calendar year 2021, the Alliance will look to expand its Clean Team presence in the neighborhood by adding increased shifts for warmer weather months and will be looking into adding various overnight shifts during warmer months. This overnight shift will be concentrated to the waterfront areas around Exchange Place, Grundy Pier, and the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway between York and Essex Streets. The Alliance observed an increase in pedestrian activity during the overnight hours in these locations during the warmer months of 2020.

Another area of focus for the Alliance to build upon in 2021 is our public safety program that was started in 2020. The Alliance began this program after listening to feedback from local stakeholders and elected officials about the proliferation of loitering and illegal behavior, including violating open container regulations, illegal parking, setting off fireworks along the waterfront, and noise violations. In 2021, the Alliance will seek to establish this program for the warm weather months and follow a staffing schedule similar to what was carried out in 2020.

The Alliance's 2021 landscaping contract is currently established, however may be expanded to include the following areas: Port Authority planters, railing-mounted planters, and pedestrian mall planters. In

2021, the Alliance will also be looking to launch the establishment of the Exchange Place Pedestrian Mall, which formally received City Council approval in September 2020. This includes putting together a temporary perimeter barrier consisting of concrete blocks and planter boxes to delineate vehicle and pedestrian areas.

This will be a temporary solution that will allow the Alliance to activate Exchange Place Plaza while it works on the formal approvals needed to break ground on the permanent construction of the new plaza. Establishing the pedestrian mall in Exchange Place also means activating the space, which includes bringing in tables and chairs, umbrellas, and various activities into the new pedestrian space. In mid-late 2021, the Alliance will seek to break ground on the permanent construction of the new plaza designs. In 2021, the Alliance will also be continuing to roll out its wayfinding and design system that it has been developing. In 2021, the Alliance also plans to carry out boardwalk repairs on Grundy Pier to replace damaged sections.

Finally, we will also be adding to our work completed at Paulus Hook park, including the addition of two new playgrounds, for a grand total of four playgrounds, that will be open to the public so families in our community can enjoy these assets.



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