

## **“At the Epicenter of the Epicenter” – Jackson Heights, Queens, New York**

Jane’s Walk May 3-9, 2021

*Scavenger Hunt Trivia Clues*

Rules: *Absolutely NO Googling!* All answers to clues are based on observations and general knowledge. Phone use for this hunt should only involve notetaking, viewing clues, and taking photos to share on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and whatever other platform you prefer!

Hashtags: #JanesWalk21JH    #MulticulturalJHJanesWalk21    #JHFightsCOVID  
#JHBGJanesWalk2021

Instructions: You can take several approaches to this hunt. You can opt to spend time on any individual clue or sets of clues in close proximity to each other or related by themes. Selecting a theme and/or nearby clues will allow you to spend time in different parts of the neighborhood, or you can choose to complete all clues, which of course is that much more fun. Warning! To complete the whole tour, you will need ample time to explore and enjoy your walk—as well as a comfortable pair of shoes! If you work up an appetite, there is a list of restaurants arranged according to geographic regions and cultures to facilitate sampling delectable cuisines from around the world on our organization’s page and on the Facebook site designated for this walk. Once you have completed your scavenger hunt, in whichever form you opt to conclude it, fill out the answers and email your finished form to our Jane’s Walk 2021 Facebook page if you would like to receive prizes. Include your name and mailing address and please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your prizes via regular mail.

Starting Point: 74<sup>th</sup> Street/Broadway - 74<sup>th</sup> Street/Roosevelt Transit Hub

### **Clue #1**

The saying “All roads lead to Rome” is a proverb underscoring the importance of Roman roads, especially their general starting point, or the Milliarium Aureum, which provided the standard measure for distances to different destinations. In Jackson Heights, all transportation routes lead to this stop. How many means of public transportation lead straphangers here?

## Clue #2

*From Roosevelt Avenue, head north towards 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue along 74<sup>th</sup> Street. Stop at 37<sup>th</sup> Road.*

One of New York City's latest innovations for breaking up traffic, providing pedestrians more access to roads and offering additional open space to dense neighborhoods like this one, include pedestrian plazas. Diversity Plaza is one of two pedestrian plazas made permanent in the neighborhood for enhancing open space. This plaza represents the diversity of the neighborhood. The dense retail belt housed in low-rise buildings is now augmented by mobile eateries which have become popular around the city in the form of food trucks. Begin counting food trucks at Diversity plaza. How many ethnic varieties can you count among food trucks in the neighborhood alone?

## Clue #3

*DETOUR! Walk to 76<sup>th</sup> Street and 37<sup>th</sup> Road (NOT 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue) to get a sense of how big our neighborhood trees can be. Take a look at the London planetrees just north of the 37<sup>th</sup> Road corner. Along whichever route you choose to take, search for the broadest trees using these specimens as reference points for your observations.*

While Jackson Heights does not have vast park space, it does have a significant tree population! And yet, despite the visible presence of trees along our streets, this community lags slightly behind the rest of the city averaging 19% tree cover while the city's richest tree canopy peaks at 21%. If you had to guess at the size of the diameter of our largest trees, how many inches would you estimate our oldest trees to be? Keep an eye out for our largest trees and guess at their girth!

## Clue #4

*Go to 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between 74<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Streets.*

The Bruson Building is unlike the other commercial buildings around it. It used to be the site of a favorite Italian restaurant called Armondo's, the campus for Plaza College, and numerous other local retail shops. It was decimated by a fire in 2014 and took longer than the 18 months construction was expected to take to rebuild the structure at a similar size and capacity. One of its offices is now the Queens headquarters for a popular Congresswoman garnering national attention for her radical politics, her age and ethnic background, and her direct speaking style, especially as it is amplified by social

media. Who is the Congresswoman for District 14, encompassing parts of north central Queens, Rikers Island and the Bronx?

### **Clue #5**

*Walk along 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, heading east.*

Jackson Heights was constructed as a planned garden community consisting of apartment homes with enhanced air circulation and natural lighting, in contrast to Manhattan's typical railroad apartments which came to be seen as unhealthful units conducive to the spread of diseases. The Garden Community that sprang up in Jackson Heights was financed by this company which bought farmland in the area following rumors of the imminent construction of an elevated rail line in the area. Find a popular coffee company on 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue. What name can you find engraved on the building housing the site of this Left Coast chain? Upon finding that engraving, you will know what Corporation financed and designed historic Jackson Heights.

### **Clue #6**

*While on 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, walk between 74<sup>th</sup> Street and 82<sup>nd</sup> Street to get a sense of the diversity of food cultures found here! (**Bonus:** For foodies continue along the whole stretch of Jackson Heights up to Junction Boulevard. Refer to our organization's homepage or our Facebook page for a list of restaurants by global region if you want to sample our global cuisine.)*

Among the most popular food concepts across different cultures and regions are those that consist of stuffed, often fried though sometimes steamed, almost bite-sized balls of dough. How many dumpling-like foods can you count along the Historic District's ethnic restaurants? (Note: just one country alone accounts for *several* of these doughy treats, so think broadly!)

### **Clue #7**

*Walk north to the neighborhood's only actual park (as in, more than a small playground) called Travers Park. It is situated between 78<sup>th</sup> – 79<sup>th</sup> Streets, on 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue.*

This park dates back to 1948, created during the tenure of Robert Moses, the famed NYC Parks Commissioner, and “Goliath” to Jane Jacobs’ “David”. Until 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this park looked very much like a standard pocket playground common during the Moses era. Last year, the park reopened, completely redesigned to include the second pedestrian plaza in the neighborhood besides Diversity Plaza, encountered in an earlier stage of this hunt. What used to be 78<sup>th</sup> Street between Northern Boulevard and 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue is now the adjoining strip between Travers Park and a small playground area sold by the Garden School to the city in 2017, making the expansion of the park possible. Look around Travers Park for clues on whom this greenspace is named after. Who was Thomas J. Travers (1897-1958)?

### **Clue #8**

*Walk along 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue (up from whichever street you prefer); you will need to walk along the entire stretch of the Open Street program in Jackson Heights to answer this clue.*

In addition to the diversity of regions and cultures in Jackson Heights, this neighborhood is also notable for its density, and lately for its increasingly segregated housing stock. Housing in the neighborhood ranges from apartments equivalent to one-family homes, to illegal basement “garden apartments”. As the city flattened the COVID-19 curve, the need for outdoor access became tantamount. But city parks with playgrounds were closed to deter people from congregating. The city began to shut down streets to vehicular traffic to allow room for necessary social distancing. Take a walk along one of NYC’s most popular and successful Open Streets arteries, 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue. How many blocks does the whole strip stretch?

**Bonus:** *For birders* – how many species of birds can you see or hear along the Avenue alone? Provide a total and list your finds.

### Clue #9

*Head to 82<sup>nd</sup> Street and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue.*

Jackson Heights is famous for its diversity reflected in the 117 languages spoken here, for its housing stock—in particular, its garden apartments—as well as for a few popular pop culture icons who called the neighborhood *home* (including John Leguizamo, Lucy Liu, Don Rickles, Gene Simmons, and many other entertainers of different sorts, ranging from musicians to scientists and scholars). It is also known for being the birthplace of a favorite board game. Take a look at the street signs by the Community Methodist Church located between 81<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Streets, on 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue. What game do the street signs here honor and what is the name of the inventor of this game?

### Clue #10

*Walk south back towards the elevated #7 train on 82<sup>nd</sup> and cross Roosevelt Avenue. Head into the adjacent neighborhood called Elmhurst and walk towards Broadway (you are technically outside of Jackson Heights, but it is worth a visit!). Stop at the Elmhurst Hospital complex and on the way there, or upon your return to the subway, pay special attention to the transformations along 82<sup>nd</sup> Street and Ithaca.*

While Jackson Heights was “the epicenter of epicenter” more generally, it was Elmhurst Hospital Center (also referred to as NYC Health + Hospitals), located on 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, which was at the eye of the COVID-19 storm. This hospital, staffed with able and dedicated medical professionals, serves patients speaking over 100 languages. Its staff consistently deals with persistent shortages of supplies, and patients deal with long delays for medical attention. During the heart of the pandemic in NYC, the hospital had to rent refrigerated trucks to serve as morgues, accept donations of 40 ventilators and set up temporary tents outside to treat patients. It is situated in a part of the neighborhood that is dramatically changing. This past month, Target Express opened on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street along with three adjacent chain food stores. The community opposed this development project for a while but ultimately lost the battle. The business complex that rose on that corner is expected to block or slow traffic for first responders in ambulances heading towards Elmhurst. Additionally, commercial chains are impacting local rents negatively, not just for residents, but also for local businesses. Related to wellness/wellbeing, there is a small storefront in this area that starkly contrasts with chain retail stores, has occupied the same storefront for multiple decades and is dedicated to alternative healing, much in keeping with the customs of immigrant communities living in the area. What is the name of the closest “healing” center to that playing a pivotal role in the global pandemic, or Elmhurst Hospital? *Hint:* it is type of business quickly disappearing from the city and offering a variety of services from natural medicine to psychic advice, amulets, and more.

## Clue #11

*Return to the 74<sup>th</sup> Street train station. This clue can be found on Roosevelt Avenue, walking west.*

In addition to Jackson Heights arguably being the most culturally diverse township in New York City, it is also the home of another “minority” population that has found an easy home here. Initially in part related to the influx of residents associated with the theatre industry in the city moving to the area for its convenience given its proximity to Manhattan, the LGBTQIAA+ community became a significant neighborhood demographic, still visible along Roosevelt Avenue. Its marked presence in the neighborhood’s night life is changing, however, as this club demonstrates in its shift away from being one of the main venues for fashion shows, drag queens and drinks to serving the newly arriving Latin American population. What is the name of the bar reflecting the *ever-changing nature* of this and every other neighborhood in the city? *Hint: head towards 76<sup>th</sup> Street.*

## Bonus Clue!

*Near the 74<sup>th</sup> Street train station.*

On 75<sup>th</sup> Street, at the crossroads with 37<sup>th</sup> Road, there is an unusual species of bird not native to this region, one that would not normally survive this environment, and yet, it has become a beloved neighborhood mascot. This bird enjoys the luxury of an extensive wardrobe created especially for it by a neighborhood resident for special occasions, or just for whimsy. What species of bird is this rare, stationary, decorative bird? *Hint: make sure to look at the Elmjack Mall if you are a visitor to Jackson Heights and not a resident.*

**Congratulations!** You have completed the Jackson Heights Beautification Group’s Scavenger Hunt! This tour is designed to consider elements of our neighborhood that have influenced the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our community’s life. If you would like to receive more information about the neighborhood, post your questions on the wall of the Jane Walk’s – Jackson Heights Facebook page, or use the messaging feature there. If you would like to receive prizes, send your completed questionnaire using this same message feature on Facebook with your name and mailing address completed below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in our walk this year! For suggestions, comments, and other feedback, send us a message on Facebook. We hope to make walks around our neighborhood a yearly event and we wish to improve from year to year based on your input!